

THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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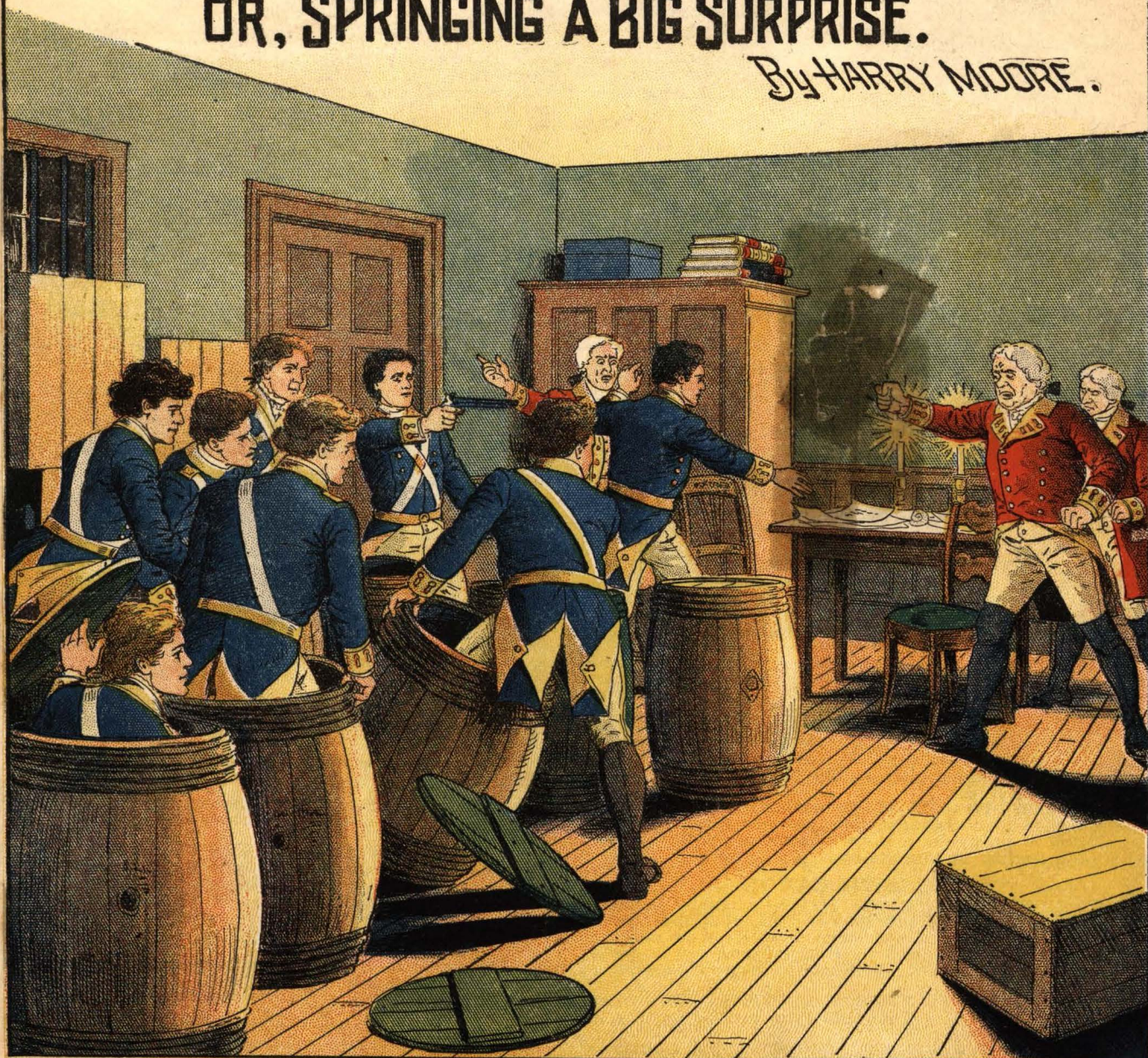
No. 104.

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 26, 1902.

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CHAPTER I.

THE GIANT PATRIOT.

One beautiful September afternoon of the year 1779 a party of British troopers were riding along the road leading westward from Savannah, Georgia.

In the party were perhaps a dozen men, and they were laughing and talking and seemed in high spirits.

Insofar as that was concerned there was no reason why they should not be in good spirits. The British army at that time occupied Savannah, and had things pretty much its own way in the State of Georgia.

But suddenly there was an interruption of the jollity of the riders.

There sounded the reports of two pistols, and two of the troopers reeled and fell from their saddles.

Again two shots rang out, and another trooper fell to the ground, while a fourth fell forward upon his horse's neck, where, clutching the animal's mane, he was enabled to remain.

"Rebels!" cried the leader of the party, a lieutenant. "Fire into the underbrush, men."

Before they could do so, however, out from among the trees at one side dashed a horseman.

He was a large man, almost a giant in size, in fact, and in his hand was a sword of extraordinary size and length, and evidently of great weight.

As the stranger dashed forth from among the trees, he cried out in a loud voice:

"Death to the minions of a tyrant king!"

Then he attacked the eight redcoats with such terrible fury that they were thrown into great disorder. Their horses reared and plunged, and the owners drew their swords and attempted to offer battle to the terrible stranger, but their efforts were not much more effective than would have been those of boys of six or eight years against a grown man.

Almost before they knew it four of their comrades had been cut down, and the remaining four, seeing that their fate would be the same if they remained, whirled their horses around and dashed back in the direction of Savannah.

And after them dashed the giant stranger, waving his immense sword and yelling:

"Death to the tyrant king!"

To say the redcoats were frightened is stating the case very mildly. They were terror-stricken.

They had never encountered such a man before.

Lieutenant Marsh, the leader of the party of redcoats, turned in his saddle, and looked back.

"He is within pistol-range, I think," he muttered. "I'll try a shot at him. He is so big I ought to be able to hit him."

As he said this he drew a pistol and cocked it.

Turning in his saddle, he leveled the pistol, took aim the best he could, and fired.

A mocking laugh was all the effect from the pistol shot.

"Ha, ha, ha! Try again, you redecoated coward!" cried the pursuing horseman. "Try again, I say, and see if you can do better next time."

Lieutenant Marsh did try again, with no better result.

A mocking laugh rewarded him once more.

"Fire upon the rebel, men," cried the officer, his face red with rage. "See if you can bring the insolent scoundrel down. He is large enough to furnish a splendid mark."

The other three soldiers, thus ordered, drew their pistols and fired at the pursuing horseman, and again the mocking laughter rang out.

"Is that the best shooting the minions of King George can do?" the giant horseman cried tauntingly. "If so, they had better return to England and practice a year or so before coming back to try to fight the patriotic people of America."

The redcoats fired still another volley, and again the mocking laughter rang out.

"You might as well save your powder," cried the pursuer; "you cannot injure me. You could not hit me if you were to fire at me for a week."

"Is he man or demon?" asked the lieutenant, his face pale now, instead of red. Fear had overpowered anger, and he was now only eager to make his escape.

"He must be a demon, lieutenant," replied one. "I am sure I saw him reel in his saddle when we fired the last volley, but he simply straightened up and laughed mockingly at us."

"He is certainly a terror in a fight!" the lieutenant went on, "and we must get away from him if we wish to save our lives. Even the four of us would not be a match for him."

"I should say not," said one. "He has already proved that by killing eight of our comrades."

The lieutenant glanced back over his shoulder, and a little cry of dismay and terror escaped his lips.

"He is gaining on us!" the officer cried.

The other three turned their heads, and looked back. They saw that the lieutenant had spoken truly.

The giant horseman had drawn nearer, and was slowly but steadily overtaking them.

"You are right, lieutenant," gasped one. "He is catching up to us."

"And heaven have pity on us when he does catch us!" from another.

"If he reaches us, we must whirl upon him, and attack him suddenly," said the lieutenant.

"With our swords?" asked one.

"Yes."

"It will be suicide, lieutenant, nothing less," was the reply, with a shake of the head.

"Stop!" at this moment cried the pursuing horseman; "stop, I say!"

"What do you want?" called out the lieutenant.

"I want you to stop and fight me."

"Oh, you do?" There was sarcasm in the officer's tones.

"Yes."

"Well, you will have to excuse us," was the reply. "We prefer not to stop."

"You are cowards!"

"Perhaps we are, perhaps not."

"You are, or you would stop. Are you not four to one?"

"We were twelve to one a few moments ago."

"You might as well stop and fight it out," the pursuing horseman cried, "for I am going to follow you till I catch you, and then I will cut you down as if you were straw men."

"Do you hear that?" gasped one of the troopers. "Jove, I guess we are goners."

"Perhaps we can keep away from him till we reach Savannah," said another. "It is only two or three miles farther."

"You'll have to catch us before you cut us down," called out the lieutenant in a burst of defiance.

"I'll catch you, easily enough; don't you see I am gaining right along?"

"Yes; but we will soon be in Savannah."

"You will never live to reach Savannah, you miserable representative of a tyrant king."

There was something so deadly in the tone of the giant horseman's voice that the hearers shivered.

"Ugh! I don't like the way he talks!" said one.

"Neither do I!" from another.

"We are doomed!" from the third trooper.

"We won't give up without making a fight for our lives," the lieutenant declared as bravely as he could, but his voice trembled in spite of his efforts to prevent it.

"Little good will it do to make a fight," said one. "We are as children against him. We tried that back yonder, and once is enough for me."

"It is enough for me, too," from another.

"I don't want to try it again," from the third.

"Then you will simply sit still and let that demon split you from head to waist-line, will you?" cried the lieutenant.

"No, I won't do that," replied one.

"What will you do, then?"

"I am going to wait till I see that we are unable to escape, and then I am going to jump off my horse and take to the timber."

"That is what I will do, too!"

"And I!"

"Jove, that isn't a bad idea," said the lieutenant. "I never thought of that."

"We will stand a good chance of making our escape if we do that, I think," said one of the troopers.

They glanced back, and it was seen that their pursuer was considerably closer than when they last looked.

"I don't think we will ever reach Savannah on horse-back," said one, after the backward glance.

"No, he's gaining fast."

"He will catch us before we go a mile farther."

"You had better turn back," called out the lieutenant.

"We are almost to Savannah, and if you go too close you will be captured or killed."

"Thank you," was the sarcastic reply. "I know where Savannah is, my redecoat friend. I have been there a few times in the past, and expect to go there many times in the future."

"If you follow us much farther this will be your last trip," the lieutenant declared, as bravely as he could speak.

"Bah! spare your breath, lieutenant!" was the scornful reply. "You cannot frighten me or cause me to turn back. I am going to add four more to my list of victims before I give up the chase."

"Just listen to that, will you," gasped one of the troopers. "There is a positive statement for you!"

"He means to do it," from another.

"You may safely wager that he does; if he gets within striking distance of us, swish! will go that five-foot sword of his, and off will go our heads!"

Onward rode the troopers, at the best speed of their horses.

They kept urging the animals onward, in an effort to get greater speed out of them, but the horses were doing their best, and could not respond.

And closer and closer came the pursuing horseman.

The troopers kept looking back, and the nearer the horseman came the bigger and fiercer he looked.

He was not more than twenty yards behind the four now, and one said, with a nervous quaver in his voice:

"I'm not going to wait much longer! I'm going to jump off my horse and take to the timber."

"Stop!" called out the pursuing horseman at this juncture. "Stop, I say, and make a fight for your lives. Don't act like cowards!"

At this moment a party of troopers to the number of

twenty men came riding around a bend in the road less than one hundred yards distant.

"We are saved!" cried the lieutenant.

CHAPTER II.

A TERRIBLE COMBAT.

"Saved!" cried the three troopers in unison.

As they drew near the approaching party the lieutenant cried out:

"Kill this giant who is pursuing us. He is a demon, and has killed eight of our brave boys."

The oncoming party of troopers opened up to let the lieutenant and his three comrades pass through, and as they rode through the opening thus made the lieutenant and his men glanced back.

To their amazement they saw that the giant horseman was dashing onward straight toward the party of troopers.

Its appearance did not seem to daunt him in the least.

"Is he man or demon?" gasped the officer.

"The latter, I think," replied one of the troopers.

As for the members of the party of troopers that had just put in an appearance, they were amazed by the boldness of the single horseman.

They saw he was a giant in size, but even so, what could one man hope to do against twenty?

This was the question they asked themselves, and without stopping to try to answer it, they up with their muskets, and fired a volley at the horseman.

They confidently expected to see the man fall off his horse to the ground, riddled with bullets, but to their surprise nothing of the sort occurred. The giant did sway in his saddle slightly, but that was all. He was uninjured, they saw at once, for he waved his sword in the air and cried:

"Base minions of a tyrant king! I will show you how a patriot can fight!"

The next instant he was in the midst of the troopers, and his terrible sword flashed in every direction. It was so huge that to a man of ordinary strength it would have been an unwieldy blade, but this giant handled it as if it were made of a stick of pine.

He attacked the troopers so quickly on the heels of the volley they had fired that they had not had time to draw their swords, and the result was that by the time they did so five or six had been cut down.

Fourteen or fifteen to one is terrible odds, however, and even though that one was a giant in size, and a wonderful fighter, he could not hope to get the better of the enemy in such an unequal combat.

The giant did not seem to have any such thoughts, however; he kept fighting fiercely, and his terrible blade described such swift circles in the air that the troopers hesitated to try to come to close quarters. Several had done

it with disastrous results, and the others were becoming wary.

Feeling that they were in danger of losing the larger number of their men if they tried to compete with the giant with swords, the troopers suddenly fell back, at an order from their leader, and drawing their pistols, fired a volley at the giant horseman.

They were within a few yards of the object aimed at, and felt that they could not have missed the mark, yet the man did not fall from the saddle. Instead, he kept up the attack, and drove a portion of the party back to the edge of the timber at the side of the road.

"Great Jupiter! cannot this man be killed?" the leader of the party of redcoats gasped. "Is he invulnerable?"

"He is a demon!" cried Lieutenant Marsh, who, with his three comrades, had paused, and facing about, were watching the combat with eager interest.

So deeply were they interested, in fact, that they did not think of taking any hand in the combat. They seemed to think their only business was to look on and see their comrades do the work.

"At him, men!" roared the leader of the troopers. "Never must it be said that twenty of King George's troopers were defeated in a hand-to-hand combat by one rebel! At him, and cut him down."

"Yes, cut him down—if you can!" cried the giant, defiantly, and his immense sword was whirled around and around with such swiftness as to make it almost impossible for the redcoats to get close enough to him to injure him with their short cavalry sabers.

Still, they would probably have succeeded, sooner or later, had the unequal combat been fought out. There came an interruption, however.

Suddenly a young man of seemingly about twenty years came dashing up the road. He was mounted upon a magnificent black charger, and had a drawn sword in his right hand, and a pistol in the left. The bridle rein laid loosely on his horse's neck.

As the young man drew near he called out:

"Death to the redcoats! Down with the minions of King George!"

"That's the talk!" cried the giant, delighted. "Reinforcements are at hand, and not a single Britisher shall be left alive to tell the story of their defeat!"

Crack!

The youth on the black horse fired his pistol, and one of the troopers threw up his hands and pitched headlong to the ground, dead.

"That's the way!" cried the giant patriot. "That's the way! Give it to the scoundrels, stranger. Give it to them."

"Come on, boys!" called out the newcomer, as if calling to others up the road. "Come on. Hurry, and help us make an end of these redcoats!"

"There is a band of the rebels!" cried the troopers, and those who had escaped death at the hands of the giant

patriot whirled their horses and dashed away up the road, in the direction of Savannah.

"Come on, comrade," cried the giant horseman, waving his sword. "Come on; we will make a clean sweep of it, and kill all the scoundrels! We won't let one return to Savannah to tell the story of their defeat!"

After the troopers dashed the two horsemen, and they managed to overtake and cut down three of them. The others had good horses, however, and managed to reach the edge of the city before they could be overtaken.

"We had better hasten back," said the young man who had come to the assistance of the giant. "Those fellows will raise a party and come in pursuit of us."

"Let them," was the calm reply. "It will do them no good."

"You think they could not catch us?"

"I am sure of it."

They rode up the road at a gallop, and as they passed here and there the body of a redcoat the young man on the black horse said:

"You seem to have a strong hatred of the British, sir."

"I have reason to hate them, my young friend," was the reply, and the youth noticed that there was a sad cadence to the voice.

"Ah, indeed?"

"Yes; they killed my father."

"Then, sir, I can sympathize with you, for the Tories killed my father."

"They did?" in a voice in which was sympathy and interest.

"Yes."

"When, my young friend?"

"Three years ago."

"Ah! My father was shot down by the scoundrels only three weeks ago. He went to Savannah with a load of produce; while there a man who knew father to be a patriot told the redcoats, and they were going to make a prisoner of him. Father tried to escape, and the scoundrels shot him dead."

"That was terrible!"

"Yes; it almost prostrated my mother and sister, and I have sworn to make the villains pay dearly for the dastardly act."

"Well, you have already done so," pointing toward where a couple of troopers lay beside the road.

"This afternoon's work is only a beginning," was the reply, while a grim expression settled over the man's face. "They shall learn to tremble at the mention of my name before I get through with them."

"And what is your name, sir, if I may ask?"

"Hy name is Henry Whipple. And now, what is yours?"

The young man hesitated an instant, and then said:

"My name is Dick Slater."

An exclamation escaped the lips of the other.

"Slater, you say?" he cried. "Are you the Dick Slater who has made such a reputation as a scout and spy, and as

captain of the company of youths known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

"I am the only Dick Slater that I know of, sir, and I am the captain of the 'Liberty Boys.'"

The giant extended his hand.

"Shake, Dick Slater!" he exclaimed heartily. "I am proud to know you. I have heard many stories of your wonderful work as a scout and spy, and of the terrible fighting abilities of your 'Liberty Boys,' and I have often wished that I might meet you."

"Thank you; I am equally glad to make the acquaintance of one who can wield a sword in behalf of the great cause as I have seen you wield that one of yours."

"Thanks, Dick Slater," with a smile of pleasure. "But, if I may ask, what is the meaning of your presence in these parts? Is there anything in the wind that promises trouble for the redcoats in Savannah?"

"I think so, Mr. Whipple. I hope so, at least."

"Will you tell me what it is?"

"Certainly, since I know I can trust you. There is a move on foot to recapture Savannah from the British."

"So that is it, eh?"

"Yes."

"And where are your 'Liberty Boys'?"

"About ten miles from here, with the main army, under General Lincoln."

"So that is where your men are, eh?"

"Yes."

"And your calling out for them to come on, and help kill the redcoats, as you rode to my assistance, was merely a ruse to make the enemy think there was a large party coming, eh?"

"That is it, Mr. Whipple."

"Well, it worked all right; for the troopers turned and fled at once, as if the Old Nick was after them."

"So they did. But where are you going now, sir?"

"I am going to my home, Mr. Slater, and would esteem it a great honor if you would accompany me thither and partake of such hospitality as we are able to tender."

"You have lived here for some time, Mr. Whipple?"

"For many years."

"And know the country round about thoroughly?"

"I do."

"Then I will ride home with you, and stay to supper, for I believe you can be of considerable benefit to me, and to the great cause of liberty."

"I shall be glad to do anything and everything I can to assist you, Dick Slater; and I shall esteem it a great favor if you will make such use of me as you see fit, and shall be pleased to have you make my home your headquarters while you are in these parts."

"Thank you," said Dick. "It will be a great convenience to have some place to stay when not actually at work. I have to have some sleep, you know, even though a spy and scout, and it will be more comfortable to sleep in a house than on the ground, under a tree."

"Yes, and safer. This way. We turn aside here," and

the giant patriot turned aside into a bridle-path, Dick following.

CHAPTER III.

THE LIEUTENANT'S REPORT.

When the British troopers to the number of nine rode into Savannah at breakneck speed, and leaping off their foaming horses, told that they had been attacked and chased by a demon horseman, a veritable giant who wielded a sword of abnormal proportions with deadly effect, the British soldiers and the people were amazed indeed. And when the troopers told that eleven out of a party of twenty troopers, and eight out of another party of twelve, had been killed by this giant, assisted at the last by a stranger, the amazement turned to horror. Then anger took possession, and many were for setting out at once on the trail of the two rebels and putting an end to their existence.

Lieutenant Marsh told them to wait till he had made his report to the commander before they started to do anything, and the soldiers decided this would be best, as the under officers might be taking too much authority upon themselves if they made up a party and set out without first seeing the commander.

The lieutenant made his way to headquarters, and was shown into the private room of the commander.

"Ah, lieutenant, glad to see you," the officer said. "Got back from your trip up into the country, eh?"

"Yes, sir; and I have come here to report to you."

"What is there to report, lieutenant? You merely went on a foraging expedition, did you not?"

"Yes; but we met with an astonishing adventure."

The commandant started.

"Ah, what was the nature of the adventure, lieutenant?" he asked.

"We were attacked, sir, by——"

"A party of rebels, eh? Well, I trust that you gave a good account of yourselves."

"No, we were not attacked by a party of rebels, sir, but by one rebel."

The commandant gave utterance to an exclamation, and stared at the speaker in amazement.

"You—say—you were—attacked by—by one rebel, lieutenant?" he asked slowly.

"Yes, sir."

"You were attacked?" He emphasized the word "attacked."

"Yes, sir; attacked."

"Bless me! This is remarkable. How many men had you?"

"Eleven."

"There was an even dozen of you, then. Of course you had no difficulty in overcoming the audacious rebel. I suppose you killed or captured him?"

The lieutenant shook his head.

"I am sorry to say, sir, that we did neither," he said.

"You let him escape?" in a tone of amazement.

"More, sir. We lost eight of our men in a very few moments, and the remaining four were only too glad to flee for our lives."

"What!"

The commandant yelled the word, and then he dropped back upon a chair and stared at his visitor in silent and wondering amazement, mingled with horror.

"You say that—one—man—attacked twelve—of you, and—and killed eight—and then the other four—fled—for—their—lives?"

The commandant gasped the words out. It was evidently a hard matter for him to speak at all.

"That is the truth of the matter, sir," was the reply.

"But the story seems preposterous," the commandant gasped. "I would not have believed any man lived who was capable of doing what you say this man did."

"Neither would I have believed it, sir; but it is the truth, nevertheless."

"Well, what sort of a man is this one, for goodness sake?"

"He is a giant in size, sir, and wields a sword with a blade at least five feet in length."

"Bless me—a giant, and with a sword five feet in length!" gasped the commandant.

"Yes, sir. I should say that he would be nearly seven feet tall, and he is large in proportion. Why, that sword looks as if it weighs twenty pounds, and yet he wields it as if made of a pine stick."

"Remarkable! No wonder your men could do nothing against him with swords. Their little, short, cavalry sabers would be no better than twigs against such a weapon and such a man."

"You are right, sir. We could not get within striking distance without getting split from head to waistline, or our heads cut clear off our shoulders."

"I can understand that; but why did you not shoot him?"

"We did shoot at him a number of times, sir."

"And did not hit him?"

"I would wager anything that we hit him a number of times, sir."

"And did not kill him?"

"No, nor even hurt him, seemingly. I saw him rock in his saddle, but he was straightened up and swinging the sword as fiercely as ever the next moment."

"Humph! You should have tried a few shots at his head."

The lieutenant started.

"Ah, you suspect——"

"That the rebel wears a suit of mail?—yes. It is pretty certain that such is the case, otherwise you would have brought him down."

"I am sure you are right, sir, now that you have spoken of the matter, for he could not have escaped death from the bullets of twenty muskets, otherwise."

"The bullets from twenty muskets?" wonderingly.

"Yes; you see, the giant rebel gave chase to the four of us, and followed us a couple of miles, and then suddenly we met a party of twenty troopers."

"Ah! And do you mean to say this demon rebel did not stop when he saw this party of troopers?"

"That is just what I mean to say, sir. He came right ahead, brandishing that terrible sword and yelling defiance."

"And it was then that the volley was fired at him?"

"Yes; the twenty troopers leveled their muskets, took good aim, and fired, and the only effect seen was that the giant swayed slightly in his saddle. He straightened up instantly, however, and dashed right in among the troopers and began cutting and slashing at a terrible rate."

"The fiend!"

"He certainly is that. Well, he had cut down five or six of the troopers before the others could draw their swords, and when they did get their swords out they could not do much."

"I would suppose that such would be the case."

"You are right. They did their best, but could not get close enough to harm him, for that long, heavy blade of his was cutting circles all around, and it was sure death to get within reach of it."

"I can understand that. But how many of the troopers in this second party did he kill, did you say?"

"Eleven; but he was assisted toward the last by another man."

"Ah, a comrade!"

"I am not sure of that. I believe the two were strangers, but doubtless both were rebels."

"There can be no doubt on that score. And when this second man appeared, what did the troopers do?"

"They took refuge in flight."

"And managed to get away, eh?"

"Not all of them. Three or four more were cut down before the edge of the city was reached."

"Well, this is a most remarkable story you have told me, lieutenant," the commandant said, rising and walking the floor with rapid, nervous strides, a frown on his face. "It is the most amazing thing I have ever heard of. That one man would be enabled to make such havoc, and virtually defeat twenty or more British troopers, is something that is hard to believe."

"Yet it is the truth, sir, and nothing but the truth."

"I know it must be true, lieutenant; but it is hard to realize that such can be the case."

"It would not be so hard to realize, sir, if you had seen that demon rebel in action, as I saw him, with that immense sword whirling and twisting through the air with lightning-like quickness."

"I suppose you are right; but we must run that scoundrelly rebel to earth, and capture or kill him, lieutenant."

"It should be done, sir, of course; but I think it will be a difficult thing to accomplish."

"Perhaps so; but we will make the attempt. I will send

out two or three forces, with instructions to run him to earth if possible."

"You had better see to it that they are good-sized parties, sir; otherwise they will simply be going to their death."

"I will see to that; each party shall contain fifty men."

"There should be at least that many in each party, sir."

At this instant a beautiful girl of perhaps twenty years entered from another and adjoining room. She started back as her eyes fell upon the lieutenant, and would have withdrawn, but the commandant said:

"Come in, Mildred; it is only Lieutenant Marsh, who has just been making his report, and a most wonderful report it is, too, my dear."

"I did not know you were engaged with anyone, father," said the girl, who was Major Thornhill's daughter, and a most lovely and lovable young woman.

Her mother had died when Mildred was a baby, and she had been taken care of by nurses, and when she grew up to be a miss she asked to be permitted to share the fortunes of war with her father. She had been with him in India, Africa, and China, and was now with him in America. She was worshiped by the officers of Major Thornhill's staff, and of these not one was more desperately in love with Mildred than was Lieutenant Marsh. Consequently he was delighted when the girl appeared, and was pleased when the major told Mildred to remain.

The lieutenant bowed gracefully, and greeted the young lady as warmly as he dared. The fact was that Mildred was heartfree. She cared nothing for any of the officers of her father's staff, and least of all, perhaps, for Lieutenant Marsh. He was a bigoted, vain fellow, and thought himself quite the handsomest man in the army, and the girl knew this, and detested him accordingly.

"I have come to ask you to let me go out for a ride, father," said the girl, after acknowledging the lieutenant's greeting with a cool bow.

"It is not advisable that you should go this afternoon, Mildred," said the major.

"Why not, father?" in surprise.

"It isn't safe."

"Why not?"

"There are rebels about."

"But they wouldn't hurt me, father."

"I don't know about that. It seems there is a very demon of a rebel in the vicinity of the city. He attacked a party of troopers, of which the lieutenant here was a member, and killed eight and put the other four to flight."

"You don't mean to tell me that you were one of the four, lieutenant?" the girl asked, a scornful curl to her lips.

"Yes, Miss Thornhill," flushing.

"Humph," with a toss of the head. "And you have been posing as a brave man."

"I fancy I am as brave as most men, Miss Thornhill," said the lieutenant; "but this rebel was a giant, a veritable demon, wearing a coat of mail. He wielded a sword five

feet in length, and was impervious to our bullets, so we were forced to flee, not from cowardice, but with the idea of saving our lives, that is all."

"A giant, wearing a coat of mail, and with a sword five feet long," exclaimed the girl, her eyes lighting up. "How I should like to see this wonderful man."

"Well, you might not like it so well, if you really were to see him, Mildred," said her father, drily; "and as I am afraid you might run across him if you went out riding, I think it will be best that you stay in the city this afternoon."

"Oh, but I must go, father," the girl declared. "I want to see this wonderful rebel."

The major loved his daughter dearly, and could never deny her any wish, so he finally said she might go. "But you must not go far into the country," he said, "and you must be accompanied by a bodyguard."

"What good would a bodyguard do against such a man as you say this rebel is, father?" with a slight showing of scorn in the tones. "The members of the bodyguard would flee at sight of the giant American, and I would be left to take care of myself, so I might as well go alone, and thus avoid prejudicing himself against me."

"Have your own way about it, Mildred; and if you get into trouble, it will be your own fault."

"Very well, father. I will take all the blame for whatever happens."

CHAPTER IV.

MILDRED THORNHILL APPEARS.

Henry Whipple and Dick Slater rode onward, following the winding pathway through the forest, and at last came out at the edge of a clearing of perhaps twenty acres. At the farther side of the clearing was a loghouse of goodly size.

"My home," said Henry. "We followed a bridlepath, and had not so far to go, but there is a wagon-road also."

There was a stable perhaps one hundred yards from the house, and the two rode straight to the stable, and dismounted.

Leading the horses in, they tied them in stalls, and unbridled and unsaddled the animals. Then they left the stable.

Henry Whipple led the way to the house, and opening the door, entered, Dick following.

The giant patriot introduced his mother and sister Lucy to Dick, and the two gave the youth a pleasant greeting.

The woman was seemingly about fifty years of age, and was good-looking even yet, while the girl, Lucy, who was evidently about eighteen years of age, was a very beautiful girl.

As soon as they learned that Dick was the famous patriot youth who had earned such a reputation as a scout and

spy, they seemed to be unable to do enough to make it pleasant for him, and when they learned that he had helped Henry fight the redcoats, they thanked him sincerely.

"I am afraid Henry will lose his life by his recklessness, Mr. Slater," the woman said.

"I don't think there is much danger, Mrs. Whipple," said Dick with a smile. "Unless he gets so reckless as to attack an entire regiment of them."

"Well, I am likely to do that if I happen to run upon them," said the giant quietly.

"You must not be too reckless, brother," from Lucy.

"Oh, I'll be careful," with a smile.

"By the way, Mr. Whipple," said Dick. "I would like to know how you escaped death when the twenty redcoats fired at you at short range."

"Did you see that?" asked Henry.

"Yes; that was just as I came in sight of you."

"It is very simple, Dick," was the reply. "I wear an armor of mail."

"What! You wear mail?"

"Yes; a shirt of mail. It is flexible, being made of fine links of steel, and no bullet can penetrate it."

"I see."

"I was hit by a dozen of the bullets, I judge; they made me rock slightly, but otherwise they did no damage."

"Well, that is an idea!"

"And a good one, especially for a man as large as I am. I present such a good mark that any fairly good marksman can hit me, but if the bullet cannot penetrate, it does not matter."

The four talked till it was time to get the evening meal, when the woman and girl went into the kitchen, leaving Dick and Henry to themselves.

They talked of matters that were of interest to both.

Henry wished to know about the attempt which was to be made to recapture Savannah, and Dick told him all he knew about it.

"I was sent down here to do scout and spy work," he said. "I am to find out all I can, and carry the news to General Lincoln, as fast as anything of importance is obtained."

"I see. Well, I will help you all I can."

"Thank you."

When supper was ready they went in and sat at the table, and as they ate they kept up a lively conversation. Lucy was a bright girl, and it looked as if she was trying to make a favorable impression on Dick.

If he noticed it he did not let on, and he said nothing to encourage the girl to like him, for he had a sweetheart up in New York State, a beautiful girl whom he loved dearly.

While they were eating there came a knock at the front door.

Henry leaped to his feet and laid his hand on the hilt of his great sword.

"Who can that be?" he remarked in a low voice.

"I will go and see," said Mrs. Whipple, rising.

Henry drew his sword, while Dick placed his hand on the butt of a pistol, and they waited till Mrs. Whipple

opened the door. As her voice was heard in greeting to some one, followed by the sound of other voices, Henry slipped the sword back into the scabbard and said:

"It is Mart and Sue Miller."

"I'll go in and talk to them; you two finish your suppers," said Lucy, and she passed through into the sitting-room, and pulled the door shut behind her.

"A neighbor's boy and girl," explained Henry. "They have come over to spend the evening."

"Oh, that's it, eh?" with a smile. "Well, that is better than if they had proved to be a party of redcoats."

"Well, that depends on how big a party it proved to be," said Henry with a significant smile, and a touch on the handle of his sword. "If not too large a party I would have given them a lively welcome. There is plenty of room to bury redcoats around here."

This was said in a quiet, matter-of-fact voice, without a particle of bravado, and Dick said to himself that the redcoats would have to look out when they were around where Henry Whipple was.

As soon as they were through with the meal, they went into the sitting-room, and Dick was introduced to Mart and Susan Miller.

The "Liberty Boy" was not particularly well pleased with the couple. Mart was not badlooking, but there was something in his expression which Dick did not fancy. It was evident, too, that he did not take a very great liking to Dick. He eyed the "Liberty Boy" searchingly, though covertly, and then kept a pretty close watch on Lucy, noting her particularly whenever she addressed her conversation to Dick.

"He is in love with Lucy, and is jealous of me, I think," thought Dick. "I will have to look out, or he may try to deal me a blow when I am not looking for it."

And Dick, who was an observant youth, made up his mind that Susan was in love with Henry Whipple. Whether Henry cared for her or not the youth could not decide; certainly the giant patriot did not talk and act like one in love. He spoke to Susan more as if she were a sister than otherwise.

Presently Dick said he would have to be going, and Henry said he would accompany him.

"Oh, there is no need of your going with me, Mr. Whipple," said Dick. "I would not wish you to leave your company."

"Oh, he won't care," said Susan, and Dick thought there was bitterness in the voice.

"We have been neighbors all our lives," said Henry. "We are just like brothers and sisters, and none of us would expect any of the others to stay at home to keep us company."

"Of course not," said Susan, but Dick fancied there was sarcasm in the tone.

"Where are you going, if I may ask?" asked Mart Miller.

"I am going to rejoin the patriot army, many miles to the westward," said Dick quietly.

"Oh, Henry, are you thinking of joining the army?" exclaimed Mrs. Whipple.

"I am thinking of it, mother," was the quiet reply. "I wish to go with Mr. Slater and talk the matter over."

"He will be in less danger if he joins the army than if he keeps on fighting the redcoats single-handed, mother," said Lucy.

"True, Lucy; I never thought of that."

Dick and Henry Whipple had just said good-by to the others when there came a knock on the door.

Henry stepped to the door and opened it.

To his surprise he found himself confronted by the most beautiful young woman that it had ever been his fortune to look upon—so at least he told himself, as in a flash his keen eyes took in every detail of the young woman's face.

All stared at her, for it was evident that she was a stranger in the neighborhood.

"Good-evening, sir," said the young woman, in a sweet, musical voice. "I have lost my way, and would like to be directed so that I can reach Savannah before dark, if possible. I am Miss Thornhill, the British commandant's daughter."

"A female redcoat!" thought Dick. "I wonder how Henry will treat her?"

He glanced at Henry, and saw something on the face of the handsome young giant that caused the "Liberty Boy" to smile in his sleeve. Admiration was expressed there so plainly that anyone could see it with half an eye.

Mildred Thornhill, the British commandant's daughter, saw it, and if she was displeased she did not show it. And, indeed, she was not displeased. The instant her eyes had alighted upon the young patriot, she had said to herself:

"I have found my giant rebel! Isn't he a big fellow, though—and handsome! And manlylooking, too; a noble-looking fellow. I really believe I could love him!" Such were the thoughts which went through her mind, but she was skilled at concealing her feelings under a mask of calm indifference, and nothing on the surface indicated that she was interested in anything save to find the shortest route to Savannah.

Susan Miller saw the look of admiration on Henry's face, and instantly a bitter feeling of jealousy sprang up in her heart, and in the same instant she conceived a hatred for the beautiful daughter of the British officer.

"I'll scratch the hussy's eyes out if she tries to steal Henry away from me," the girl said to herself, and her eyes flashed as the thought passed through her mind. Dick happened to glance at her as the look appeared in her eyes, and he said to himself that Susan was already jealous of the beautiful stranger.

"This is all very interesting," the youth said to himself. "Mart is jealous of me, and Susan is jealous of the British commandant's daughter. I fear that complications may arise in the not far distant future."

"You have got off the main road to Savannah, Miss Thornhill," said Henry, in reply to the young lady's state-

ment that she was lost, and wished to be directed to Savannah. "My friend, here," indicating Dick, "and myself were just starting in the direction of the main road, and will escort you thither as soon as we saddle our horses. Kindly step in and have a seat."

"Thank you," said the young lady, and she entered, and Henry introduced his mother and sister, and then Mart and Susan Miller.

Miss Thornhill greeted all pleasantly, even to Susan, who could not help showing her animosity, and who returned the young lady's greeting in a curt and not very pleasant manner.

Miss Thornhill, who was as bright and shrewd as she was beautiful, guessed the reason for the girl's show of animosity, and smiled to herself.

"Very well, young lady," she said to herself, "it won't do any good to treat me in that manner, for if I should take it into my head to fall in love with this handsome young patriot I will take him away from you without any compunction whatever."

Dick and Henry went to the stable and bridled and saddled their horses and led them to the house.

"We are ready now, Miss Thornhill," said Henry, stepping to the door.

"Very well, Mr. Whipple," and rising, the young lady bade the folks good-by, all responding pleasantly save Susan, who curled up her lip and merely nodded shortly.

She was careful to be out of doors when Miss Thornhill mounted her horse, however, and when she saw Henry hold out his hand, in which the young woman placed her foot, and lift Miss Thornhill into the saddle, her heart glowed with anger and jealousy.

Dick and Henry then leaped into the saddles, and the three rode away.

CHAPTER V.

THE LOVERS SURPRISED.

While they were at the stable bridling and saddling their horses, Dick and Henry had a conversation, and had decided upon a plan of procedure.

It was Dick's intention to make an attempt to enter Savannah that night for the purpose of spying and discovering as much as was possible with regard to the fortifications, etc., but of course it would not do for the daughter of the commandant of the British stronghold to know this. She would certainly tell her father, and then it would be suicidal to try to do any spywork.

So it had been decided that when they reached the main road Dick would bid the two goodnight, and ride away toward the west, after stating that he was going to the patriot army. Henry intended accompanying Miss Thornhill toward Savannah, and Dick would turn around, as soon as they were out of sight, and follow at their heels.

Then, when Miss Thornhill parted from Henry, and rode onward into Savannah, Dick and Henry could get together again, and proceed with their work.

So when the main road was reached, Dick paused, and said:

"I will say good-by, Miss Thornhill and Mr. Whipple."

"Which way are you going?" asked Henry, just as if he did not know anything about it.

"I am going to rejoin the patriot army."

"How far from here is it?"

"Twenty-five miles," replied Dick, this being said for the benefit of the British maiden.

"When will you be down this way again?" asked Henry.

"I could not say, Mr. Whipple. I may never come this way again, though I hope to meet you at some future time."

"And I, too, shall be glad to see you again, Mr. Slater," said the young woman, extending her hand. "I am the daughter of the British commandant, true, but I am not prejudiced against any person on that account, and if a man is a man, I will honor him just as much if a patriot as if he is a Tory."

"Thank you," said Dick, and he pressed the hand warmly.

Then he shook hands with Henry Whipple, and with a cheery "Good-night," rode away up the road at a gallop.

"Now shall I say good-night to you, Mr. Whipple?" asked Mildred Thornhill, a peculiar, tender cadence to her voice.

"Not just yet, Miss Thornhill," was the reply.

"I can find my way back to Savannah, now, I think, Mr. Whipple," said the young woman. "All I have to do is to follow the road. Is not that right?"

"Yes, Miss Thornhill, and if you do not wish to have me accompany you I will turn back," said Henry, a slightly hurt tone to his voice.

"Oh, as to that, sir, I shall be delighted to have your company," the young lady hastened to say. "But I fear that if you come with me, we may meet some of—of the British troopers, and that—that you may be killed or injured, and then I should feel that I was to blame."

"Would you be sorry, Miss Thornhill?" asked Henry, his voice trembling in spite of his efforts to prevent it. The truth was, the handsome young patriot had fallen deeply in love with the beautiful English maiden.

As she noted the tremor in the young man's voice, a peculiar feeling of delight came over the young woman, and in an instant she realized that this handsome young giant was her ideal of a man—that she loved him!

"Yes, indeed, I would be very, very sorry!" she said, and there was something in her tones that caused Henry's heart to leap with delight.

"Can it be that she loves me?" he asked himself. "Surely not," he continued. "She never saw me before this evening, and knows nothing about me. I am a fool to think that she would fall in love with a great, big awkward gawk like me."

It was night now, but there was a good moon, and it was not very dark. Still, it was too dark to make it possible to see expression on the face, and all the two could have to judge the feelings of each other by was the tones of their voices.

"I don't see why you should be sorry if I were to get into trouble," said Henry. "I am a patriot, a 'rebel,' as your people call us, and you should be glad to see me captured or killed by the British troopers."

"You cannot judge a woman by the men, Mr. Whipple," was the quiet reply. "Nor is a woman's likes or dislikes fashioned by rule. It is possible for a woman to love a man who is fighting against her people—not that I mean that to have personal application," hastily.

"Ah, I would that it could have personal application," said Henry, and there was that in his tones which caused Mildred's heart to thrill with happiness.

She made no reply, and the young patriot, thinking he had made her angry, said:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Thornhill. I hope you are not offended at me."

"Oh, I am not offended at all," was the quick reply, and there was something in the tones of her voice that made her words very pleasing to the young man's ear.

As the moon came up above the tree-tops it grew much lighter, and the two were enabled to see each other quite plainly.

They rode slowly, and not like persons who were in a hurry to reach their destination. The fact that Mildred was content to ride slowly would have proved much to the mind of one who knew much about women; but Henry Whipple did not know much about them.

They talked of many things, and finally Mildred said:

"Perhaps you had better turn back, Mr. Whipple."

"Why so, Miss Thornhill?" the young man said.

"I am afraid we may meet a party of troopers."

"I hardly think it likely."

"I am not so sure about it. I heard father tell Lieutenant Marsh, who was the commander of one of the parties you had your encounter with this afternoon, that he was going to send out several parties to search for you."

Henry was amazed to learn that the girl knew so much about him.

"Then you know I fought with two parties of British troopers this afternoon, and killed a number of the men?" he exclaimed.

"I do, Mr. Whipple. Father told me all about it."

"And yet you do not hate me?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Whipple. I do not blame you for fighting for what you think is right, any more than I blame the British soldiers for fighting for what they think is right."

"I will tell you how it is that I am so bitter against the British, Miss Thornhill," said Henry. "They killed my father, only three years ago," and then he told her the story of how his father had been killed.

"I am sorry, Mr. Whipple, and I don't blame you a bit,"

said Mildred, in a low voice, in which sympathy was unmistakably present. "I do not think you have done anything other than what you should have done, under the circumstances."

"Thank you for the assurance, Miss Thornhill," said Henry.

"And now, I think you had better turn back, Mr. Whipple," said the young woman. "I should never forgive myself if I should be the means of getting you into trouble."

"I will turn back if you wish me to," said Henry. "But—I—that is—I wish that I might—that at some future time I might—meet you—again, Miss Thornhill."

"If you ride along this road almost any afternoon you will likely meet me, Mr. Whipple," was the low reply.

"Oh, thank you for the information, Miss Thornhill," said Henry, delighted. "And now, will you—do you mind—shaking hands with me—before we—part?"

The girl extended her hand promptly.

"I am glad that we have met, Mr. Whipple," Mildred said, in a voice which thrilled Henry through and through. "And I—hope—that we may—meet again."

"And so do I, Miss Thornhill!" eagerly. "And if it is left to me we shall meet many, many times!" As he spoke he pressed the shapely little hand that had been placed in his so freely, and yielding to a sudden impulse, he lifted the hand to his lips, and kissed it.

"Forgive me!" he cried. "I did not mean to offend."

"I am not offended; there is nothing to forgive," was the reply, softly given, and while the girl withdrew her hand, she did so slowly, and not quickly. It was evident that she was not displeased.

"Heaven bless you!" breathed Henry, his heart filled with delight at the girl's words and the tone used in speaking them. "Farewell until we meet again."

"Farewell," was the low-spoken reply, and at this instant out from the timber at the roadside rode a large party of British troopers.

They came forth so quickly that they had surrounded the two almost before they realized what was taking place.

As the head of the party was Lieutenant Marsh, and in the bright moonlight it was easily to be seen that his face was dark with anger.

"You are our prisoner, you rebel!" he cried, pointing his sword at Henry Whipple. "Surrender! Don't dare to offer resistance, for if you do we will kill you with as little compunction as if you were a mad dog!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE STRATAGEM THAT WON.

"Hold!" cried Mildred Thornhill sternly, her voice ringing out loud and clear as a bugle. "The first man that makes a move to injure this gentleman will have to answer to my father."

"Gentleman!" sneered the lieutenant, who was almost wild with rage, on account of seeing the patriot with the woman he loved. "He is a rebel and scoundrel."

"You are a liar!" cried Henry Whipple, promptly, his voice ringing out sternly. "I am not a scoundrel. But I know that there are many such among the British soldiers. Some such murdered my father only a few weeks ago, and what I did this afternoon was to avenge his murder—and I am not anywhere near through, either. Indeed, I am only just beginning."

"Well, you will end as quickly as you began," sneered Lieutenant Marsh. "You will be hanged for the murderer that you are, to-morrow morning."

"Don't be too sure of that, my dear lieutenant," said Henry, quietly.

"How comes it we find you in the company of this rebel, Miss Mildred?" the lieutenant asked the girl.

"That is not your business, Lieutenant Marsh," was the prompt reply; "but I will tell you, nevertheless. I got lost, and encountering this gentleman, asked him to show me the road to Savannah, and he did so. That is how it happens that I am in his company."

"And does kissing your hand come under the head of showing you the way to Savannah?" asked the officer, sneeringly. He had seen this action on Henry's part, and had been rendered almost wild with jealous rage by the sight.

"That is no affair of yours, sir!" the girl cried spiritedly. "Please remember who you are talking to. If you are not careful I will report you to my father."

"Yes, and if you are not careful, I may report you to him," retorted the lieutenant, placing emphasis on the "you."

"And get yourself kicked out of his presence for your pains!" said Mildred.

"Perhaps so, perhaps not. I am quite sure he would not approve of his daughter meeting a rebel—and this one, of all rebels—and I rather think he would thank me for telling him about it."

"You are a miserable poltroon, Lieutenant Marsh," said Henry Whipple, sternly, "and if Miss Thornhill says so, I will cut your head off."

"You need not mind doing it, sir," said Mildred. "My father will do it if he does what he threatens to do. Father hates tale-bearers, and I would not care if the lieutenant were to go to him with the story."

"Bah!" sneered the lieutenant. "Do you surrender, rebel?"

"Wait!" said Mildred. "Lieutenant Marsh, this gentleman came with me to show me the way to Savannah, and I demand that he be permitted to go his way in peace."

"You may demand all you like, Miss Mildred," replied the lieutenant, almost insolently. "But I am here under orders from your father, and I must obey them."

"What are my father's orders?"

"That we capture or kill this big rebel, whose hands are dyed with the blood of nineteen British soldiers, all slain by him only this very afternoon."

"But some of our soldiers killed his father, and he did it to avenge his father's death."

"Oh, of course you will hold up for him!" sneeringly.

"I demand that he be permitted to depart."

"You are wasting your and our time, Miss Mildred," was the reply; "we are out to-night for the especial purpose of capturing or killing this rebel, and now that we have him in our power do you suppose that we are going to let him escape? No! a thousand times no!"

"But I say you must let him depart!" cried Mildred, her voice ringing out clearly and determinedly.

"Don't say anything more to them, Miss Thornhill," said Henry. "I will fight my way out. They cannot stop me."

"Oh, yes, we can," cried the lieutenant. "We know that you wear a suit of mail, and will not shoot at your body, but at your head. Out with your pistols, men, and shoot him dead if he attempts to resist."

As the men started to draw their pistols, Henry drew his sword. At the same instant Mildred urged her horse across till it was close alongside that of Henry Whipple; then, before he knew what she intended doing, the beautiful and brave girl reached over and throwing her arms around the patriot's neck, cried out, eagerly, excitedly:

"Break through their lines!—quick! Hold tight to me, and they will not dare shoot at you, for fear of hitting me."

Henry understood the girl's plan, and clasping her with his strong left arm, he lifted her from her horse's back, and pressing her tightly to him, urged his horse through the ring of soldiers who surrounded them, and dashed back up the road at a gallop.

The redcoats did not dare fire upon the patriot, for fear they would hit the commandant's daughter, and the lieutenant was wild with rage.

"After him, men!" he roared. "After the scoundrelly rebel! We must not let him escape!"

So paralyzed were the British by the sudden and unexpected action of the patriot, however, that he had succeeded in gaining quite a start.

A glance back showed Mildred that they were well away from the troopers, and she said quickly:

"Lower me to the ground, Henry—Mr. Whipple. They will not injure me, of course, and you will be able to make your escape, I am confident."

"Thanks to you, Miss Mildred. Thanks to you—sweet-heart! May I call you that?" The patriot's voice trembled with emotion. He feared he was acting very presumptuously in speaking thus, but at the same time something whispered to him that the girl loved him, and, too, her actions went far to show this, for she had risked considerable in order to save him from capture by the British troopers.

"Yes, you—may—call me—that," was the stammering reply, and the girl hid her face on the young man's shoulder.

Only for an instant, however. Then she lifted her eyes to his face, and said again:

"Place me on the ground. I will be safe, and then you will be able to make your escape."

Henry Whipple pressed his lips to those of the beautiful British maiden, pressed her to his breast, and then reining up his horse, placed Mildred on the ground, gently and tenderly.

"Good-by, sweetheart!" he murmured. "I will be waiting and watching for you to-morrow afternoon."

"I will be here. Go!—quickly! Don't delay. They are coming fast."

Henry plunged the spurs into the horse's flanks, and dashed away.

The redcoats saw his action in placing the girl on the ground, and dashing onward, urged their horses onward with spur and yells.

"Capture him, boys, if you possibly can do so," roared the lieutenant. "Don't let the scoundrel escape."

"We will do our best!" was the reply.

When he came to where Mildred stood the lieutenant stopped.

"So you have turned traitor, have you, Mildred Thornhill!" he cried sternly and angrily. "What do you suppose your father will say when he hears that you aided the rebel to escape?"

"He will say I did right."

"Well, I don't see how you can think for a moment that he will say that."

"I do; it is very simple. The man you were determined to capture did me a great favor in guiding me toward Savannah, when I had lost my way, and you came upon us while he was so engaged, and I am sure that my father would not wish to repay kindness shown his daughter by injuring the man who rendered her a service."

"He will not be pleased when he learns that his daughter has been holding meetings with the rebel who did such deadly work to the British troopers this afternoon, Miss Mildred."

"I have not been holding meetings with him, sir."

"I saw you with him."

"Yes, but that was the first time I ever met him. I never until today knew there was such a man in existence."

"Well, I must say that you have made wonderful progress if that is the case, Miss Mildred!" sarcastically.

"Do you mean to say that you doubt my word, sir?" cried the young lady.

"Oh, no; certainly not. But I do say that your friendship seems to be very strong for such short acquaintance."

"He had rendered me a service, and I was determined that he should not get into trouble on my account, if I could help it, that is all," the girl said.

"And you were the cause of his making his escape."

"As I intended should be the case."

"I should think you would feel proud of your work."

"I do! I should do the same thing over again, if the occasion demanded it."

"You are in love with that rebel scoundrel," hissed the lieutenant, his face convulsed with rage.

"It would be none of your affair, sir, if such were the case," said the girl haughtily.

"If such 'were' the case! Ha, ha, ha!—'were'! It is the case, and it is useless for you to deny it, Mildred Thornhill."

"You forget to whom you are speaking, Lieutenant Marsh! I shall report your insolent conduct to my father, and he will settle with you."

Then the girl walked to where her horse was standing, and mounting, rode onward toward Savannah, while the lieutenant stared after her, and muttered angrily to himself.

"Confound the luck!" he growled. "She loves that scoundrelly rebel, and I won't dare say anything to her father, for as she says, he would not approve of our taking advantage of the fellow when he had been rendering a service to the commander's daughter. Well, the only thing to do is to capture or kill the rebel. And come to think of it, I judge that the best thing will be to kill him, for if we were to capture him and take him to Savannah that girl would either persuade her father to set him free, or she would do it herself by stealth."

Then the lieutenant rode onward up the road in the direction taken by his men, in pursuing Henry Whipple.

He had gone but a short distance when he found the troopers halted in the road. Many had dismounted, and were searching in the timber beside the road.

"Well, what does this mean?" the lieutenant asked.

"The rebel took to the timber at this point, lieutenant," explained one of the men.

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

"Yes."

"And haven't the men been able to find where he went?"

"No; he has escaped, I guess, for they can find no signs of him anywhere."

He must be run to earth," said the officer, angrily; "dismount, all. I shall leave four men here to take care of the horses. The rest will accompany me, and we will search the timber thoroughly for miles around. We will put in the night at it if need be, and it will be strange if we do not stumble upon his hiding-place."

"That's a good idea, lieutenant."

"I think so."

A few minutes later the redcoats set out through the timber. They moved slowly, and spread out, fan-shape, as they went.

"We will capture that accursed rebel, or know the reason why!" said Lieutenant Marsh to himself, his teeth coming together viciously.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK SLATER WOUNDED.

Henry Whipple had not gone very far after placing Mildred on the ground before he heard a peculiar whistle from the timber at the roadside.

He recognized the whistle as being a signal for him to stop, and he did so.

He knew the signal was made by Dick Slater.

Bringing the horse to a stop, he turned him aside, and rode in among the trees.

"This way, Henry," said a voice. "I am right here."

Henry was soon beside Dick.

The clatter of the hoofbeats of the horses ridden by the British troopers sounded close at hand, now.

"Which way, Dick?" asked Henry.

"Follow me. We will move along parallel with the road, and go in the direction of Savannah."

The two moved along, keeping a few yards back in the timber, and they heard the troopers come to a stop and begin talking in an excited manner.

"They don't know what to do," said Dick.

"You are right."

The two moved along till they came opposite where Lieutenant Marsh and Mildred Thornhill stood, and it was all Dick could do to keep Henry from stepping out and cutting the lieutenant down when he was heard talking insolently to the commander's daughter.

Presently the girl left the lieutenant and made her way to where her horse stood, mounted and rode onward toward Savannah, and Henry felt better.

He and Dick moved onward, and although they did not keep pace with the girl, they were enabled to keep their eyes on her for quite a while.

At last, after having taken a look back down the road, without seeing anything of the redcoats, the two emerged from the timber, mounted their horses, and rode onward toward Savannah.

As they did not again catch sight of Mildred Thornhill, they judged that she had increased the pace of her horse, and moved more rapidly.

When they were within a quarter of a mile of the outskirts of Savannah they paused, and were debating their next movement when of a sudden a band of horsemen dashed out from among the trees and called upon them to surrender.

The patriots drew their pistols, and made a dash to escape, firing as they went.

"Crack! crack!"

"Crack! crack!"

Each fired two shots, and then, thrusting the pistols into their belts, they drew their swords.

Then crack, crack, crack, crack! went the weapons of the troopers—for such the members of the party in question were, and Dick would have fallen from his saddle, had not Henry Whipple reached over and seized hold of him, and held him up.

"Are you bad hurt, comrade?" Henry asked.

There was no reply.

"Jove, I fear he is dead!" murmured Henry. "Well, I will carry him away from here, and see whether or not he is," and he urged his horse up the road, cutting his way through the enemy's line with that terrible sword.

He carried Dick on his arm, as if the youth were a straw man. He seemed not to feel the weight.

"Hurrah! we've killed one of the rebels!" yelled the troopers. "Give chase to the big fellow, men. We will catch him, for his horse cannot carry the double weight and get away from us."

The magnificent black horse that had been ridden by Dick kept right alongside the horse bestrode by Henry Whipple, and the intelligent animal seemed to know something was wrong, for every once in a while he would stick his nose almost against the insensible form of his master and utter a whinny.

Again and again the pursuing troopers fired volleys at the giant horseman, but though he was struck by bullets several times, of course he was not injured, none of the missiles happening to strike his head, which he kept bent forward, so as to make it a difficult mark.

Fearing that the youth in his arms might be hit again, Henry held the unconscious form in front of him, thus shielding it with his own huge body.

He noted the action of the magnificent black horse, and said:

"Noble old boy! You know something is the matter with your master. You are faithful—more faithful than many human comrades would be under the same circumstances, for you are sticking to him."

And the horse whinnied again, as if knowing he was being addressed.

Onward rode Henry Whipple, and after him came the troopers.

They urged their horses to their best speed, but the animals were not very good ones, and it could not be seen that any gain was made on the fugitive.

"We must catch that fellow!" cried the leader of the party. "I am confident he is the giant who killed our comrades this afternoon, and if we can catch him we will be doing a big stroke of work."

"And the fellow in his arms," said another. "He must be some rebel of importance, too."

"Yes, but I rather think he is dead."

Henry Whipple, too, was afraid Dick was dead.

Every few moments he looked down into the pale face of the youth, and his heart was filled with misgivings.

"If he isn't dead he must be seriously wounded," thought the brave patriot. "Well, I will carry him to my home and take the best of care of him, and if he is not fatally wounded mother and sis will pull him through, for they are famous nurses."

Onward rode the giant patriot.

His horse was a large, strong, and speedy animal.

He had been selected with a special eye to his fitness for Henry's work—the chasing of redcoats.

So now, although weighted down with two on his back, the animal showed no signs of weariness, but kept onward at good speed.

Indeed, Henry presently saw that he was drawing away from his pursuers.

"Good!" he murmured. "I will escape from them yet."

Presently he rounded a bend in the road and came upon the horses belonging to Lieutenant Marsh's party of troopers, who had gone into the timber to look for the patriot.

The young patriot could not turn aside, and a quick, searching look told him that there were only three or four troopers there, so he felt that he had not much to fear.

"The others are in the timber, looking for me," he thought. "Well, I am glad of that. They won't find me."

The four redcoats who had been left in charge of the horses saw the horseman approaching, bearing the unconscious form of his friend, and they at once jumped to the conclusion that this was the giant of whom they were in search.

They uttered wild yells, and leaped out beside the road, drawing their pistols as they did so.

"Halt!" they cried. "Halt, or you are a dead man!"

"Out of the way, cowardly minions of a tyrant king!" cried Whipple, waving his sword. "Out of my way, or I will cut you down."

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

The redcoats fired four shots in quick succession, but did no damage, though two of the bullets struck the giant's form.

He reeled slightly, but quickly recovered his balance and dealt one of the troopers a blow with the immense sword, cutting him to the waistline.

This caused the other three to leap back in great haste, to get out of reach of that terrible sword, and by the time they were through scrambling the horseman was past and away.

The three grabbed up their muskets and fired after the fugitive, but did no damage that they could see.

Then they set up a loud yelling, intended to bring their comrades back out of the woods.

The next moment the pursuing troopers came up, and as the fugitive had now drawn away ahead, they stopped to speak to the three.

"Where are the rest?" asked the leader of the second party.

"They are searching for the giant in the woods," was the reply.

"They won't find him. That is the fellow, yonder."

"We know it is, and were yelling to bring our comrades back out of the timber."

Then the troopers noticed the dead soldier lying on the ground.

"Did the giant do that?" they asked.

"Yes," was the reply. "We thought we were out of reach, but poor Jack wasn't. It seems as if that demon can reach halfway across the road with that long sword of his!"

"You are right; he is a terror. But I think we killed his comrade."

"The fellow he had in his arms, eh?"

"Yes."

"Likely; I hope so."

"So do I."

Presently Lieutenant Marsh and his men came rushing forth from the timber at the roadside.

"Why did you call us? What is the trouble? What was the firing about?" the lieutenant cried excitedly.

"One of the men who had been left in charge of the horses told him, and when he learned that the giant of whom they were in search had passed along the road a few moments before, and that he had cut down one of the troopers his anger knew no bounds."

"We must make an end of that scoundrel, and soon at that," he cried. "If we don't, he will do lots of damage to our men."

Then the lieutenant turned to the commander of the other force of troopers and asked him how they came to be there.

The other officer told how they had come upon the giant and a companion, and had tried to surround them, but had failed, and how they had brought down one of the two, and then given pursuit to the other.

"We will follow the rebel up the road," said Lieutenant Marsh. "We may be able to overtake him yet."

"I don't think so," was the reply; "but we might as well be going in that direction as any."

The troopers first gave burial to their dead comrade, and then mounting, rode up the road in the direction taken by Henry Whipple.

Meanwhile the giant patriot had ridden onward at the best speed of his horse, and when he came to the point where the footpath led through the timber to his home, he brought his horse to a stop, Dick's horse stopping also, of his own accord.

Henry looked back and listened intently.

He could see nothing of any pursuers.

Neither could he hear anything of them.

"I guess I shall be safe in going straight to my home," he murmured; and then he turned aside from the road, and made his way through the timber, following the winding footpath, Dick's horse following close behind.

Twenty minutes later he came to a stop in front of the log house that was his home, and which he and Dick had left a couple of hours before.

As he drew rein in front of the door it opened, and his mother and sister stood there, looking out at him with wondering eyes.

"Is it you, Henry?" asked his mother.

"Yes, mother."

"And who is that in your arms?"

"It is Dick Slater."

A scream escaped the lips of Lucy Whipple, while her mother gave utterance to an exclamation of horror.

"Is he dead, Henry?" the woman asked, in awed tones.

"I don't know, mother," was the reply. "I hope not!"

CHAPTER VIII.

HENRY ACTS AS MESSENGER.

Henry Whipple had no difficulty in dismounting, even though burdened with the form of his friend, and he left the horses standing in front of the door and carried the unconscious "Liberty Boy" into the house, and into a bedroom on the ground floor.

He placed the youth on the bed, and while his mother held the light, he made a careful examination, to see how severely wounded Dick was.

Henry found that Dick had received a very severe wound.

A bullet had struck him in the right breast, but had, fortunately ranged diagonally upward and outward, passing through and out, just under the collar-bone.

It was a severe wound, and the terrible shock, when the bullet struck, had rendered the youth unconscious, and he had bled so much that he had not come to, while being carried at a rapid pace several miles on horseback.

Henry was covered with the blood which had flowed from Dick's wound, and his mother had at first thought he was wounded, also.

"What do you think? Is he dead?" asked Lucy, tremulously, when Henry had made an examination.

The young man shook his head.

"No, he isn't dead," he replied; "but he is very seriously wounded."

"You don't—think—he—will—will die?" the girl asked anxiously.

"I hope not, Lucy; I think not; but he will have to be carefully nursed."

"Oh, I—I mean mother and I will nurse him, Henry!" the girl cried.

"I will dress the wound now," said the young patriot, "and then we will see if we can bring him to."

"He looks almost as if he were dead," said Mrs. Whipple, with a shudder, for she remembered when her hus- was brought to the house, dead, only a few weeks before.

"He has lost lots of blood, mother, but he is far from being dead."

Then Henry applied restoratives, and presently Dick moved slightly; then his eyes opened slowly, and he looked around him in a weak but wondering manner.

"What does—this—mean? Where—am—I?" he asked, in a voice so weak as to sound scarcely louder than a whisper.

"Sh! Take it easy, Dick," replied Henry, bending over his friend; "don't try to talk, but listen, and I will tell you all about it."

"I—remember—now," said Dick feebly. "We were—attacked—and I was—wounded."

"That is it, exactly, Dick. And now you must not talk, for the effort will weaken you."

"Am I—pretty—badly wounded?" the youth asked.

"Rather seriously so, I think, Dick; but not fatally by any means. You will simply have to remain here, quiet, for two or three weeks, and let mother and Sister Lucy nurse you, and then you will be as good as new."

"Two—or—three weeks."

"Yes."

"But—I—can't—do that. I—must—do the—work I was—sent here—to do."

"Never you mind about that, Dick," said Henry, reassuringly. "I will attend to that work myself."

A look of pleasure came over Dick's face.

"I—thank—you, Henry," he said.

"That is all right; I am glad to take your place, and I will find out all I can about the British, and about their fortifications, and everything, and will carry the news to General Lincoln, just as you intended doing."

"You are—a—friend—indeed, Henry!" said Dick.

"That is all right, Dick. I can carry out my plans for killing the redcoats, and do your work at the same time."

"I'll tell—you—what you—might do, Henry," said Dick. "Go to—General Lincoln's—camp, and—tell—him I—am wounded, and—that you will—do the work—in my place."

"I'll do it, Dick. I'll go this very night."

"And, Henry—bring—three or four—of the—'Liberty Boys' back—with—you."

"I'll do that, too, Dick."

"They will—help you, and—will be a help—to your mother and—sister, too."

"I will do it, Dick; I will go at once, and will tell General Lincoln you are wounded, and will ask to be permitted to do the work you were to do. And when I return I will bring some of the 'Liberty Boys' with me."

"On second—thought, bring—all of—them, Henry," said Dick. "They will—be able to—do considerable work—against the British—and will protect the patriot families—from the redcoats."

"All right. I'll tell them you say for all of them to come."

"Thanks—they will—be—glad to—come."

Then Henry told Dick to be quiet, and not talk any more.

He left the room and house, and taking only time to lead Dick's horse to the stable and unbridle and unsaddle him, Henry mounted his own horse and rode away; first cautioning his mother and sister to keep a sharp lookout for redcoats.

"Though I hardly think they will find their way here," he said. "We are more than two miles from the main road, and the pathway is so crooked they would scarcely find it, while the wagon-road leads to a cross-road, and not to the main road that goes to Savannah."

Henry rode along the pathway leading through the timber, and finally reached the main road.

Before emerging from the timber he paused and listened.

Hearing nothing, he dismounted, and stepping out into the road looked up and then down it.

He could see quite a ways, but nowhere was anyone in sight.

"I guess the coast is clear," he murmured. "Likely the redcoats have returned to Savannah."

Mounting his horse, Henry Whipple rode up the road at a gallop.

He continued onward for an hour and a half, and then he was suddenly hailed:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"This must be the patriot encampment," the young man thought. Then aloud he said:

"I am a friend."

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign," ordered the sentinel.

Henry rode forward until told to halt, in rather a sharp voice.

"You have come far enough!" was the threatening remark of the sentinel. "Give the countersign!"

"I don't know any countersign," replied Henry. "But I am a friend."

"What makes you so confident of that?"

"I am a patriot, and I think this must be the encampment of the patriot army. Am I not right?"

"You won't get me to give you any information," was the reply. "I will call the officer of the guard, and let him settle with you."

"Very good. Call him at once, for I am here on important business."

"I come in the place of Dick Slater, one of the 'Liberty Boys'."

"What's that!" cried the sentinel, excitedly. "You come as the representative of Dick Slater? Where is he? What is the trouble? Has anything happened to him? I am Bob Estabrook, his chum and lifelong friend, his more than brother, in fact, and if anything has happened to him I wish to know it, at once."

"He is wounded, sir."

"Wounded? Oh, tell me, is his wound fatal?"

It was evident from the tone of the sentinel's voice that he was greatly worried.

"No, he is not fatally wounded," was the reply. "But he is seriously wounded, and will be laid up for two or three weeks, and I have come to report to General Lincoln."

"Where is he now, sir?"

"At my home, about fifteen miles from here."

"And is anyone taking care of him?"

"My mother and sister—two of the best nurses in this part of the country."

"Good! I am glad to hear that. I will call the officer of the guard, who will show you to General Lincoln's tent."

Bob Estabrook, the sentinel, called the officer of the guard, who put in an appearance quickly, and was told what was wanted.

"You say Dick Slater is seriously wounded?" he remarked in a solicitous voice. "Jove, I am sorry to hear that! Come this way, and I will conduct you to General

Lincoln's tent. I saw a light there as I came along, and think he is still up."

He led the way, and Henry followed leading his horse—he having dismounted.

They paused in front of a tent presently, and the officer of the guard turned to Henry and asked his name.

"Henry Whipple," was the reply.

The officer called the orderly, told him who Henry was, and that he wished to see General Lincoln, and the orderly entered and asked the general if he would see the stranger.

"Certainly. Show him in at once," was the reply.

So the orderly led the way into the tent, and introducing Henry, withdrew.

General Lincoln was a large, florid man, good-natured in appearance, as indeed he was in fact. He was a good soldier, but was not a great general.

"Have a seat," he said to Henry, indicating a campstool.

The patriot sat down, and the general eyed him with interest the while.

"Jove, what a big fellow he is," the general said to himself. "I would not like to have him for an enemy, and then meet him in single combat."

"Now, what is it you wish to say to me, sir?" asked General Lincoln, when the caller had taken the seat.

"I have some information for you that will be of interest, I think, sir," was the reply.

"Very well. I shall be glad to listen to you. What is the information?"

"I have come to tell you, sir, that Dick Slater, whom you sent to spy upon the British in Savannah, is at this moment lying in my home, fifteen miles from here, seriously wounded."

"You don't tell me!" cried General Lincoln, aghast. "This is indeed bad news."

CHAPTER IX.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS."

"He asked me to come and tell you, General Lincoln," said Henry.

"I'm glad you did so, sir; but, tell me, is there any danger that the wound may terminate fatally for Dick?"

"I don't think there is much danger of it doing so, sir."

"I am glad to hear that. Where is the wound?"

"In the right side of the chest, sir."

"A bad place," with a shake of the head.

"Yes, and it is a bad wound, but Dick seems to be a healthy sort of fellow, and he has splendid nurses—my mother and sister, so I am not much afraid that the wound will be fatal."

"It will keep him in bed for quite a while, however?"

"Yes; for two or three weeks, I should say."

"Too bad. Well, I must send someone else to take his place to spy on the British at once."

"I am going to ask that you permit me to do that, sir."

The general eyed the young giant searchingly.

"I fear your size would be against you if you attempted to do spy work," he said presently. "You could not venture among the British without their knowing you were not one of them and suspecting you."

"True. I had not thought of that."

"What is your name, sir?"

"Henry Whipple."

"Of course you are a patriot, or you would not be here."

This was made as an assertion, so Henry merely bowed.

"I will tell you what I will do," continued the general.

"I have a number of good spies among the 'Liberty Boys,' and I will send one or two of them to take Dick's place. But I shall be glad to have you render them all the assistance in your power."

"Thank you, sir. I shall be only too glad to do anything and everything possible to help them. I wish to do the British all the damage possible, for they murdered my father, and I am going to have at least a hundred lives to pay for his."

This was said calmly, but with grim determination expressed in face and tones.

"The British murdered your father, you say?" remarked the general.

"Yes, sir."

"I do not blame you for wishing to avenge his death."

"I have already killed nearly a score, sir, but I am going to keep at it. And now, sir, I will tell you what Dick Slater told me to tell you."

"Do so, please."

"He told me to tell you to let his company of 'Liberty Boys' return with me."

"Ah, he wants that all shall come?"

"Yes. He said that some of them could do scout and spy work, and that the company could protect the patriot families of the vicinity, and guard him while he is sick, also."

"That is a good idea; and the 'Liberty Boys' shall accompany you."

"Thank you, sir. Dick will be pleased."

"Yes; and the feeling of pleasure and satisfaction engendered by the presence of his brave boys will probably go far toward making his recovery rapid."

"Quite likely, sir."

"When will you return?"

"At once, sir; just as soon as the 'Liberty Boys' can get ready for the trip."

"Very well. We will come to an understanding regarding this matter, and then I will send word for the 'Liberty Boys' to get ready to go with you."

The two talked half an hour longer, and then the general sent the orderly to tell the "Liberty Boys" to get ready for a trip.

When the youths were roused up by a messenger sent by Bob, and learned that Dick, their beloved young commander, was desperately wounded, they were greatly excited and alarmed, and were anxious to see and talk with the stranger who had brought the news.

As may be supposed, therefore, when the orderly arrived at their quarters and told them to get ready to go with the stranger to where Dick lay wounded, they were only too glad to obey.

They hastily made preparations for the trip.

When Henry Whipple appeared among them, after finishing the interview with General Lincoln, they besieged him with questions about Dick, and Henry said to himself that Dick Slater must indeed be a splendid fellow, or he would not be loved by all the youths in his company.

He answered their questions as well as he was able, and when he assured the youths that their brave young commander was not fatally wounded, but would undoubtedly get well, they were relieved.

"We were afraid he might be fatally hurt," said Bob Estabrook, who was Dick's right-hand man, and was almost a brother in fact. "Jove, I don't know what we would do if Dick was to be killed."

"He will be all right in two or three weeks, I am confident," said Henry.

Half an hour later the entire company of "Liberty Boys" rode out of the encampment and away toward the east.

They rode at a good pace, for Henry was a bit anxious. He was afraid that the two parties of British troopers who had chased him and wounded Dick might find his home, and cause his mother and sister trouble.

Urged on by his anxiety, he led the company at a swift pace, and they were almost to his home after an hour and a half of riding.

As they neared the clearing they slackened speed, for they thought that if the redcoats should be in there they might hear the hoofbeats and take flight.

When they reached the edge of the clearing, however, and looked in the direction of the house, there was nothing to be seen of any British; the scene was quiet and peaceful.

"I guess everything is all right," said Henry. "Come on."

They rode across the clearing, and approached the house.

There was a light shining through the window.

The youths dismounted, and Bob accompanied Henry to the door.

Henry knocked, and a voice called out, "Who is there?"

It was the voice of Mrs. Whipple.

"It is I, Henry, mother. Open the door," the young man replied.

A glad exclamation came from within, and then the door opened, and as the woman caught sight of the youths standing outside she gave utterance to a startled exclamation.

"Who are they, Henry?" she asked.

"The 'Liberty Boys,' mother," was the reply. "They are

the company of which Dick Slater is the captain, and they will remain in this vicinity and protect us and other patriot families from the redcoats."

"Ah, I am glad of that."

"How is Dick resting, mother?"

"Easy, Henry. I think he is asleep."

"No, he isn't asleep," called out Lucy, from the other room. "He says for me to tell you, Henry, and Bob Estabrook, if he is with you, to come in."

"Come, Bob," said Henry, and he led the way into the bedroom, followed by Bob.

Bob stepped to the bedside quickly, and bending over Dick, took hold of his hand and pressed it as gently as though it were that of the girl he loved.

"Dick, my boy, how are you feeling?" he asked, huskily, his eyes dimming with the tears that wanted to come forth at sight of the pale and wan face of his friend.

"I am—feeling—first rate—Bob," was the reply, in a weak voice. "I am—all—right."

"I am glad of that, old man. And now, all the boys are here, just outside. Do you think it will be too much of a strain on you if they come in and see you?"

"No, Bob. I—shall—be glad—to—see them."

Bob hastened out and told the youths that Dick was awake and would be glad to see them.

This pleased the "Liberty Boys" immensely, and they went in by twos, till all had seen Dick and spoken to him cheerily and encouragingly.

With some persons in Dick's condition it might have been bad, and caused a fever to come on; but with Dick it was different. He was so accustomed to danger and the sight of wounds, and to excitement, that it did not hurt him at all. Indeed, it seemed to do him good, and some color came into his face, and his eyes shone with satisfaction.

When all the youths had come and gone, Dick turned to Henry and asked:

"What did—General—Lincoln—say?"

"He was sorry to hear that you were wounded, Dick," was the reply. "And he said that some of your 'Liberty Boys' could take your place and act as spies."

"That is—all—right."

"He was perfectly willing, seemingly, to let your company of 'Liberty Boys' come with me."

"I—was—sure—he—would—be."

"Yes. Well, get to sleep, now, if you can. It will rest and strengthen you."

"I—will do—so; and I think your—sister had better go—to bed and get—some rest," with a glance at Lucy, who had kept her seat near the head of the bed all the time.

"No, I will sit up the rest of the night," the girl hastened to say. And Dick said she might do so, if she would let one of the "Liberty Boys" share the vigil with her. She said she would, and Tom Fenton came in and took a seat near the foot of the bed.

Tom was a handsome young fellow, and it was evident that he had become impressed by the beauty of the girl, for he spent a good portion of the time in looking admiringly,

but not boldly at her. Dick, sick as he was, noted this, and the hope that the two might learn to love each other sprang into life within his breast.

CHAPTER X.

HENRY AND MILDRED MEET AGAIN.

Next morning the "Liberty Boys" settled down to make themselves comfortable.

Bob Estabrook was named to take his place and act as a spy by Dick, and Mark Morrison and Henry Whipple were to be his assistants.

All felt confident that things would move along all right.

"If the redcoats come fooling around here they will wish they hadn't," said Sam Sanderson, who was to have command of the "Liberty Boys" in Bob Estabrook's absence.

No move was made till after dinner, and then Bob, Mark, and Henry set out.

It was Bob's intention to venture close to Savannah and spy the best he could, and then, if circumstances favored him, he thought of attempting to enter the city when evening came.

They rode slowly but steadily onward, keeping a sharp lookout for redcoats, but reached a point within one mile of Savannah without seeing anything of any of the enemy.

They paused, and were debating what they should do when a horseman—or horsewoman, rather—came riding around a bend in the road a third of a mile away.

"There comes a woman," said Bob.

Henry was looking at the horsewoman eagerly, and there was a look of pleasure on his face.

"That is Miss Thornhill, the daughter of the commander of Savannah," he said.

"The British commander's daughter?" exclaimed Bob. "Then she will likely report having seen us here, will she not?"

"I don't think she will," said Henry, with such a peculiar intonation to his voice that the other two looked at him questioningly.

"Ah, I think I understand!" said Bob. "Come, Mark, we will enter the timber here, and leave Henry to meet the young lady alone."

"Thank you," said Henry, with a smile.

Bob and Mark rode into the timber, and disappeared from view, and the horsewoman was soon face to face with Henry Whipple.

It was indeed Mildred Thornhill, and she looked even more beautiful to-day than she had the night before; at least so Henry told himself. But then he was in love, and likely the young lady would grow more and more beautiful in his eyes with each meeting.

Henry wheeled his horse and rode right alongside the maiden.

"Mildred, sweetheart!" he breathed. "I am so glad to see you once more."

"And I am glad to see you, Henry," was the reply.

Reaching over, Henry gave the beautiful girl a kiss, and then they rode slowly along and talked of—well, it is not necessary to tell all. I will leave most of their conversation to the imagination of the reader.

They rode along for a mile or more, talking of the matters that were nearest their hearts, and then they came back to earth, and talked of everyday affairs.

"By the way," said Mildred, "was the young man, Dick Slater, as I think you said his name was, killed last night, or was he only wounded?"

"He was only wounded, Mildred. But how did you know he was shot?"

"I heard it in Savannah. The soldiers came back, and were telling about it."

"Ah, I see. The young man was seriously wounded, but will get well, I am confident."

"I am glad to hear that, because—he is your friend."

"And do you indeed love me so well that you wish my friends to escape death or injury at the hands of the British, Mildred?"

"Yes, Henry."

This called for another kiss, and the stalwart young man was not slow to take it.

The girl kept glancing back over her shoulders, as if apprehensive of pursuit, and Henry noticed this, and asked:

"Are you afraid you were followed, Mildred?"

"I feared it might be possible, Henry. Lieutenant Marsh is jealous, and I think he suspects that I love you, and in that case it would be like him to follow me when I come out for a ride, in the hope that he might get a chance at you."

"Well, it will be a dear piece of business for him if he does follow you, and attempt to attack me."

Mildred looked admiringly at her stalwart lover, and they rode onward, happy as could be, even though danger lurked on every hand.

They rode westward perhaps two miles, and then turned and rode back in the direction of Savannah.

Henry remained with the beautiful girl till they reached the spot where he had joined her; then she said:

"I don't think it safe for you to venture any nearer the city, Henry, so we will say good-by for to-day, and part."

"Just as you wish, Mildred," replied Henry. "I would ride right into Savannah with you, if you said so."

"But I don't say so. I wish you to keep at a safe distance from Savannah, Henry. They are going to capture or kill you, if they possibly can do so. You must be on your guard constantly."

"I will be on my guard all the time, Mildred."

"That is right; and now good-by."

"Good-by, sweetheart." Then exchanging kisses, they parted, Mildred riding toward Savannah at a gallop, while Henry rode into the timber at the roadside and stopped.

Presently he saw Bob and Mark coming toward him through the timber, and they were soon with him.

"We have been down close to the edge of the city," said Bob.

"That was pretty risky business for daytime, wasn't it?" asked Henry.

"Yes; but we were careful. We remained in the timber."

"Did you learn anything?"

"I climbed a tree and got a good view of the city, and managed to locate some of the fortifications."

"That was something."

"Yes; but to learn what it will be necessary to know I will have to enter the city."

"I suppose so."

"It will be a difficult and dangerous undertaking, but I am determined to do it."

"Will you make the attempt to-night?"

"Yes, and each succeeding night, till I make a success—that is, if I fail on the first attempt."

"What shall we do now?"

"I guess we might as well return to your home. By the way, did the young lady ask who we two were?"

"No," replied Henry. "She did not ask about you at all."

"Likely she did not wish to know who we were."

"That is likely; and then she would not feel that she knew something that she ought to tell her father."

"That's right. She is in rather a hard position, isn't she?"

"Yes, indeed."

The three young men were on the point of riding out into the road, with a view to starting back to Henry's home, when they saw a party of horsemen come around the bend in the road a third of a mile distant, and come galloping in their direction.

"There is a party of redcoats!" said Bob. "We had better not let ourselves be seen."

The party of troopers in question were commanded by Lieutenant Marsh, who had seen Mildred leave the city, and had secured permission to take a party of troopers and go in search of the giant patriot who had killed twenty of their men.

They had followed the girl as rapidly as possible, but had not got started very soon after she left the city, so had not got out into the country in time to catch Henry Whipple in Mildred's company.

They met Mildred just around the bend in the road, after she had parted from Henry, however, and the lieutenant halted her.

"Ah, good-afternoon, Miss Mildred," said the lieutenant, half-sneeringly. "I see you are addicted to the habit of riding alone of late."

"Is that any business of yours?" asked the girl, haughtily.

"Well, no, I can't say that it is; but as a friend of the commandant I am of course anxious regarding the safety

of his daughter, and I am afraid you might be captured by the rebels—or by that giant, who has been causing so much trouble recently.”

“You need not worry about me, sir,” was the cold reply. “I am amply able to take care of myself.”

“Of course you think so, but you might not be, after all.”

“I will risk it.”

“Humph. I suppose you have not seen the giant rebel?”

This was said in a tone which proved that the speaker was pretty sure the girl had seen the man in question.

“I don’t think that I am called upon to answer your questions, Lieutenant Marsh,” replied the girl. “If you wish to find the rebel in question you should be able to do so without assistance from me.”

“I am aware that I shall have to do so without assistance from you, Miss Mildred,” sneeringly.

“Let me pass,” said Mildred, haughtily. “I wish to return to Savannah.”

“Very well,” and the lieutenant made a gesture, and his men divided, leaving the way clear for the girl to pass through.

She did so at once, and rode onward, while the lieutenant gave the order for his troopers to advance, which they did, the party riding onward up the road.

It was the lieutenant’s party that was seen by Bob, Henry, and Mark.

“They seem to be determined to hunt you down,” said Bob to the giant patriot.

“Yes; the rough manner in which I handled them yesterday afternoon has made them very angry,” was the reply.

“There are about fifty troopers in that party, don’t you think?” remarked Bob speculatively.

“Yes, I should say there are that many.”

“Too many for us to attack?”

“I don’t see why we cannot give them a number of shots from our pistols, and then get away in safety.”

“I was thinking it might be done. Are you both in for doing it?”

“I am,” declared Henry.

“And I!” from Mark.

“Then we will give the redcoats a surprise. We each have two pistols, and there is no reason why we should not empty the weapons before they awaken to a realization of what is taking place.”

Stationing themselves behind large trees, the three drew their pistols and waited till the troopers were opposite them. Then Bob gave the signal, and upon the air rose the reports of the weapons.

Crack, crack, crack!

They were not expecting anything of the kind, and for a few moments they were seemingly incapable of making a move; three or four had been hit by bullets, however, and those who were wounded gave utterance to cries and groans of distress.

Taking advantage of the temporary demoralization of the enemy, the three patriots darted away through the timber to where they had tied their horses; then, untying the animals, they made their way onward as rapidly as possible.

They could hear the soldiers yelling and calling out to one another, and realized that they were being followed.

Fearing that they might be overtaken if they continued straight onward, they turned sharply to the right, and made their way in a direction parallel with the road.

They hoped to be able to get past the end of the line of redcoats; and they did succeed in doing so, presently. Then they made their way back to the road, emerged from the timber, mounted, and rode away up the road at a gallop.

Perhaps half a dozen troopers, who had been left in charge of the horses, saw the fugitives and set up a loud yelling.

Their comrades heard them shouting, and came rushing back, but by the time they had arrived at the spot and mounted the three patriots were half a mile away, and still going like the wind.

“They played us a trick,” cried Lieutenant Marsh. “They turned aside after entering the timber a little ways, and got past us, and back to the road.”

“That is what they did, sir,” said one of the troopers.

“Yes; and we must not let them get away from us. One of the three is the giant rebel, and he must die!”

“They seem to be well mounted, sir.”

“You are right. They have good horses.”

This was soon made evident, for though the redcoats urged their horses to their best speed, it seemed to be impossible to gain on the fugitives.

Presently it was seen that the three horsemen were drawing away from the troopers.

Lieutenant Marsh noted this fact.

“I guess they are going to make their escape,” he said bitterly. “Their horses are too fast for ours.”

“It looks that way, lieutenant.”

A few minutes later the three passed out of sight around a bend in the road, and when the troopers rounded the bend they looked in vain for the fugitives.

Nowhere were the three to be seen. They had disappeared.

“They have entered the timber somewhere,” said the lieutenant. “But where? That is the question.”

That was indeed the question, and it was one that the troopers could not answer.

They rode onward up the road, but slackened the speed of their horses to a walk, and watched the edge of the timber for some signs of a path.

They found no path, and at last, after having gone about

CHAPTER XI.

BOB TRIES SPY WORK.

Each of the three fired two shots.

The shots came as a surprise to the redcoats.

three miles farther, they gave it up in disgust, and turned back toward Savannah.

Meanwhile Bob, Mark, and Henry had made their way back to Henry's home.

They attended to their horses, giving them feed and water, and then went to the house.

They went in and asked Dick how he was feeling, and received a cheery reply, to the effect that he was feeling as good as could be expected.

"I'll be—on my feet again—in a—week," the youth declared.

"I hope so, Dick," said Bob.

"But you must not be in too big a hurry, Dick," said Mark. "We will be able to look after the British, and you must take care of yourself."

"That's right," said Henry.

The wounded youth said he would take care of himself, and not be in too big a hurry to get out; but at the same time he said he would not remain cooped up any longer than he thought was absolutely necessary.

The "Liberty Boys" built camp-fires, as evening drew near, and cooked their own suppers, but Bob and Mark were invited to eat at the table in the house, with Mrs. Whipple and Lucy and Henry.

The table was a good-sized one, and there was ample room for six—two at either side, and one at either end. Lucy mentioned this to her mother, and said that one more of the "Liberty Boys" might as well eat with them, in the house.

Dick Slater heard them talking, the room he was in being near the kitchen, and the doors being open, and he said to Bob, who was sitting beside the bed:

"You hear what Miss Lucy is saying? Ask Tom Fenton to eat at the table with you. I am sure that he has fallen in love with the girl, and I believe she will learn to love him." The wounded youth spoke slowly and in disjointed fragments of sentences, and when he had finished Bob said:

"All right, Dick. I'll have Tom eat with us."

Then he went out to the kitchen, and said to Mrs. Whipple:

"There is room for another man at the table, you say?"

"Yes, Mr. Estabrook," was the reply.

"Very well," said Bob. "I will go out and ask Tom Fenton to come in. He is a fine fellow." As he said this, Bob gave Lucy a quizzical glance which caused the blood to rush to her face. There was a glad look in her eyes, however, and Bob could see she was pleased.

Tom Fenton was pleased, also, when Bob told him he was to eat at the table with the Whipples and the two "Liberty Boys."

"Say, Bob, I'm much obliged to you for doing this," he said, earnestly. "I won't forget it, and if ever I get a chance to pay you back I'll do it."

"It is Dick's work, Tom," was the reply. "He told me to have you come in the house and eat at the table."

"Good for Dick!" Tom said. "Well, I'll do something for him, if ever I get the chance."

The supper was a good one, well cooked, and the three "Liberty Boys" certainly enjoyed it. Dick ate something, too, he being served by Mrs. Whipple, who divided her time between the wounded youth's bedside and the table in the kitchen.

After supper Bob got ready to make another trip to the vicinity of Savannah, and Mark and Henry insisted that they should accompany him.

Bridling and saddling their horses, they mounted and set out.

They had timed their start so that it was dark when they emerged from the timber, and started down the road toward the city.

They arrived at a point half a mile from the edge of Savannah without having encountered any redcoats, and here Bob dismounted and turned his horse over to his two comrades to take care of.

"I will go the rest of the way on foot," he said. "I am going to try to slip past the sentinels and enter the city."

"It will be dangerous work, Bob. Be careful," cautioned Mark.

"I know it, Mark. But we must learn something regarding the fortifications, and about the location of the British troops, and that is the only way to do it."

He bade his friends good-by and struck out for the city.

He moved cautiously as he drew near the outskirts of Savannah.

Presently he caught sight of a sentinel, and paused.

"Now, how am I to get past that fellow?" he asked himself.

He knew it would be a difficult and dangerous thing to do, for the moon was shining brightly, and the only thing that had kept him from being seen so far was the fact that he had taken advantage of the protection afforded by the shadows of trees, fences, etc., in advancing.

"I'll wager that Dick would get past that fellow in some manner," thought Bob. "But I am not Dick. I'll make an attempt to do it, however."

Bob stole cautiously forward, and to one side, so as to strike the edge of the city at a point midway between two streets, and as far from the sentinel as possible.

At the next street was another sentinel, and the "Liberty Boy" saw it was going to be a difficult matter to get between the two without being seen.

He had only about twenty yards to go to reach the back yard of one of the houses when there was the sharp crack of a musket, and a bullet whistled within a foot of his head.

One of the sentinels had caught sight of the youth and fired.

"Jove, I had better get out of this, for the present, at least," thought Bob, and he darted away with the speed of a startled fawn.

The sentinel who had fired set up a yell, and dashed

after Bob, and the other sentinel, catching sight of the fugitive, up with his musket and fired.

He missed, however, and then with a yell set out in pursuit of Bob.

Their yells aroused other redcoats in the vicinity, and soon quite a crowd was racing after the "Liberty Boy."

"Oh, yell all you want to!" murmured Bob. "Yelling doesn't scare me."

The youth was a splendid runner, and it did not take long for him to prove to the sentinels that they were no match for him when it came to this.

He drew away from them, and as soon as he reached the point where the trees were thick enough to hide him from the view of the pursuers he darted in among the trees.

When the redcoats reached the point where Bob had entered the timber, they did the same, and they scattered out and looked for him, but to no avail.

Bob ran onward almost parallel with the road, and was not long in reaching the point where his two comrades were awaiting for his coming.

They had heard the musket-shots and yelling, and suspected that Bob had gotten into trouble. They had feared that he might be captured or even killed, and when he put in an appearance they were delighted.

"Are you wounded, Bob?" asked Mark, anxiously.

"No; they never touched me, Mark," was the reply. "But they are in pursuit of me, and we had better be getting away from here at once."

They led the horses out of the timber, and leaping into the saddles rode away up the road at a gallop. It happened that there were two or three redcoats in the road, and the patriots were seen and the alarm given.

Those who had followed Bob into the timber came rushing back to the road, but when they saw the three were mounted they stopped and contented themselves with shaking their fists after the horsemen in impotent rage.

"That was a spy," said one of the sentinels; "but we put a stop to his coming into the city, all right."

"So we did," said the other sentinel. "I wish we had hit him when we shot at him."

"So do I."

CHAPTER XII.

BOB LEARNS SOMETHING OF INTEREST.

But wishing did no good, and the redcoats turned and made their way back to the city, the sentinels taking their stations at the streets, while the others returned to their quarters.

The report was soon all over the city that a rebel spy had tried to slip in, but had been discovered, fired upon, and chased away. The report caused no small excitement, and the officers and soldiers discussed it for an hour or more.

Meanwhile Bob, Mark, and Henry were making their way back in the direction of Henry's home. They had talked the matter over, and it had been decided that it would be folly to try to enter Savannah after what had occurred.

"They will be on the lookout for the rest of the night," said Mark, "and you would certainly be discovered."

"Yes, that is what I think," agreed Bob. "I will have to wait till to-morrow night."

They went straight back to Henry's home, and found Mart and Susan Miller there. They had come over to spend the evening with Henry and Lucy, and they were greatly surprised when they found a party of one hundred strangers there. Mart was at first secretly glad when he found that Dick Slater was wounded; but on second thought he was not so pleased, after all, for he realized that Lucy would wait on the handsome youth.

Susan talked to Henry as much as she could, and asked questions about the commandant's daughter, Mildred Thornhill, in an attempt to find out whether or not Henry had seen her since she was there the evening before.

Henry saw what the girl was trying to do, and he evaded her questions, and Susan was unable to learn what she wished to know.

Presently Mart and Susan took their departure, and as they made their way along they talked freely to each other, for they were each aware of the fact that the other was in love. Susan complained that she had been unable to get any satisfaction out of Henry, and Mart said he did not know what to think about Lucy and the wounded patriot youth, Dick Slater.

"Jove, if I thought she really did love him I would wish that he would die," the youth said almost viciously.

"And I wish that hussy from Savannah was dead!" said Susan, in a fierce voice. "I believe she has won Henry's love."

Matters went along rather quietly for three or four days.

Henry met Mildred Thornhill every afternoon on the road a couple of miles from Savannah, and the two were as happy as only lovers can be. Several times the redcoats came within an ace of surrounding and capturing Henry, but he managed to get away each time.

Mildred, who knew that strenuous efforts were being made to capture or kill the patriot, begged him to be very careful.

"They know you wear a suit of mail," she said, "and if they get close enough to you they intend aiming at your head and shooting you dead."

"I will be careful, Mildred," he said. "I will be more careful, for your sake."

"I am so glad, Henry!"

Bob was busy during those days, also. He kept at work, scouting and spying, and was gradually acquiring some information; but not as much as he would have liked. He wished to enter the city and locate the fortifications, but so far had been unable to do so. The British seemed to

know that spies were close at hand, and a double force of sentinels were put out at night.

At last Bob thought of a plan which he had not tried, and he made up his mind to put it into effect.

On the afternoon of the day on which he thought of the plan, he, in company with Mark Morrison, went over to the Savannah river, and searched up and down its bank for a boat.

At last they came to a little cabin nestling on the shore, and found it occupied by an old man who made a living hunting and fishing. He carried his game to the city and sold it to the British.

He had a boat, and for a gold piece he promised to take Bob down to the city that night, and land him in a secluded little cove he knew of, where there would not be much danger of his landing being discovered.

Soon after dark Bob got into the boat with the old fisherman, and leaving Mark at the cabin, they set out down the river.

The old man rowed, and Bob sat in the stern and watched for signs of redcoats.

The fisherman kept well in near the shore, where the shadows were so thick as to hide the boat from the view of anyone who might be looking, however, and there did not seem to be much danger that they would be discovered.

Nor were they.

They managed to reach the little cove in question, and Bob stepped ashore.

He was now in the city, within the enemy's lines.

"You will wait for me here?" asked Bob in cautious tones.

"Yas, I'll wait fur ye," was the reply.

"And don't go away if you should hear a disturbance, for I may be discovered and forced to run for it, and if you were to be gone when I get here it would be all up with me."

"I'll stay here till I'm shore ye hain't comin', afore I go erway," was the reply.

"Good! Do so."

Bob stole away, and was soon threading the streets of Savannah.

He was dressed in a suit of rough clothing such as was worn by farmer boys of the region and time, and did not attract any attention.

He had no trouble in going wherever he wished, and spent two hours in tramping about the city, looking at everything that he thought would be of interest to General Lincoln, or aid him in any degree when he came to storm the city.

He had been pretty much all over the city, and had seen about all there was to see in the way of fortifications, etc., and was thinking of returning to where he had left the old fisherman and taking his departure, when the words of two British officers who passed him arrested his attention.

"The young man says that there will be at least fifty of the loyalists," was what Bob heard one of the officers

say. "They want to join our army and fight for their king. They wish, however, to meet some of the officers and talk it over before going in for good and all."

"I understand; and you and I are to meet them, eh?" from the other.

"Yes."

"When?"

"To-morrow night."

"And where will we meet them?"

"Have you ever been out on the main road running westward from the city?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember noticing a large, rambling old house, about two miles out?"

"Yes; it looks as if it were uninhabited."

"It is inhabited, however; an old loyalist lives there all alone."

"Ah, indeed?"

"Ycs, and the young loyalist who was here to-day, and told us about the fifty who wish to join the army, said we could meet at this old man's house and talk it over."

"That will be all right."

"Yes; we will ride out there, you know, and the affair is easy to manage. I think we will have no trouble in convincing the Tories that it is to their interest to join the army and help fight the rebels."

"Likely you are right."

"Yes; and fifty strong, able-bodied men are well worth securing."

"They are, indeed. And the natives are valuable to us, on account of the fact that they know the ground thoroughly, and have a better understanding of the tactics of the rebels."

"True."

Then the two began talking of some matter of no interest to Bob, and he dropped back and let them get ahead of him, for he was afraid they might notice that he was keeping behind them and become suspicious.

He had heard something of interest, however, and as he walked toward the point where the boatman was awaiting his coming, he was doing some rapid thinking.

"I believe I see a way to play a trick on the redcoats and Tories," he said to himself. "There will be only the two British officers, and the Tories will be simple country men, and not likely to make much of a fight, and it will be—or should be, at least—an easy matter for the 'Liberty Boys' to be at the old house where the meeting is to be held, and capture the entire crowd, officers, Tories, and all."

The more Bob thought of this, the more he became convinced that it would be a shrewd trick to play.

"It will be a big surprise to the British officers and the Tories as well," he thought, "and I shall take a delight in springing it on them."

Bob presently reached the point where he had left the boatman, and found him where he had been left.

"Waal, ye got back all right, didn't ye!" the old fisherman said.

"Yes, I was fortunate in not being taken notice of by any of the redcoats, so no disturbance ensued."

"Reddy ter go back now?"

"All right."

Bob took a seat in the stern, and the old man took the oars and rowed softly out into the river.

They had gone only a few yards when there came the sharp command:

"Stop! Hold on, there! Stop that boat, I say, or I will fire!"

They had been discovered by a British soldier.

"Shell I stop?" asked the old man, without showing any signs of alarm, his voice being cool and calm.

"No; keep right on pulling," said Bob.

The old man obeyed, and suddenly there was the sharp report of a musket.

Spat! the bullet struck the side of the boat, but neither of the occupants was hit.

The old man bent to the oars, and rowed as hard as he could.

"Stop, I say!" roared the man on the shore; "stop that boat, or it will be the worse for you."

"I think it would be the worse for us if we were to stop," said Bob calmly, "so we will keep right on going."

"Jest ez ye say, mister," said the old fisherman. "I hain't afeerd uv er few bullets. Et wouldn't be much loss ef I wuz ter be knocked by one uv the pesky things, fur I'm old, now, an' hev erbout outlived my usefulness, ennyhow."

"Oh, no," said Bob. "You have been very, very useful to-night, and you are good for a good many years of life yet, I hope."

"Waal, I'm willin' ter keep on livin', but I wouldn't cry much ef ther end wuz in sight," was the half-sad reply.

The redcoat who had tried to stop them fired a couple of pistol shots, but did not come anywhere near the two, and they were soon out of range.

An hour later they reached the fisherman's cabin in safety, and giving the old man another gold piece, the youths mounted and rode away in the direction of Henry Whipple's home.

CHAPTER XIII.

SPRINGING A BIG SURPRISE.

When Bob and Mark got back to the home of Henry Whipple, they went at once to Dick, and Bob told the youth what he had discovered.

"Bob, you must be on hand, and give them a surprise," said Dick.

"That is just what I had made up my mind to do, Dick, but I thought I would speak to you first, and see if you had any suggestions to offer."

"No; you know what to do."

"All right, then. I'll take charge of the affair, and to-morrow evening if we don't give the redcoats and Tories a big surprise it will be strange."

After some further conversation with Dick the two youths went out and had a talk with the "Liberty Boys," who were glad to hear that there was a chance that they would have something to do soon.

"We will be getting rusty if we stay here much longer, doing nothing," said one.

"That's right," from another.

"Well, I think that you will soon have all you want to do, boys," said Bob.

"You do?"

"Yes; General Lincoln, aided by Count D'Estaing's force on sea and land, will make an attempt to recapture Savannah soon, and then there will be fighting enough for you."

"All right. I shall be glad when that time comes."

"And I!"

"And I!"

"I'll be glad, sure!"

"So will we all!"

The night passed quietly, as did the next day.

Henry Whipple met Mildred Thornhill in the afternoon, as he had been in the habit of doing, and returned to his home just before supper time, looking very happy.

After supper was over the "Liberty Boys" began making arrangements for the work they were to do that night.

When all were ready, they set out.

"How are you going to work this affair, Bob?" asked Mark, as they rode along side by side, in the lead.

"How do you mean, Mark?"

"I mean what are you going to do—capture the redcoats and Tories as they approach the house, or wait till all are in the house, and then surround the house and make prisoners of them, or how?"

"I'll tell you what I wish to do, Mark. I would like to learn something more, if possible, and I have decided that if we can find a hiding-place in the house, or in the room, rather, where the meeting is to be held, and listen to the conversation of the officers and some of the Tories, we may learn something that will be of benefit."

"But do you think it possible to do that?"

"I don't know. We will see when we get there."

"We may be able to find a hiding-place for a few of us, but not many."

"True."

When they were within a third of a mile of the home of the old Tory who lived alone, and where the meeting was to be held, the "Liberty Boys" turned aside from the road, and entering the edge of the timber, dismounted.

They tied their horses securely, and then moved along in the direction of the Tory's house.

They approached carefully, and Bob told the boys to stop and wait awhile, when they were within a hundred yards of the house, while he went to reconnoiter.

He approached the house, and looked in through a window.

He saw that the room in question was a large one, and he saw more. The old Tory was there, moving slowly around, seemingly straightening things around.

At one end of the room was an old desk, on which stood a candle, and there were two or three chairs nearby.

Bob decided that this was in reality a sort of store-room addition to the house; a place where fruits, vegetables, and other produce of the farm was stored while waiting to be transported to market.

Standing along one side of the room were a dozen or more of barrels, such as apples and potatoes might be placed in for taking to market, and these caught Bob's eye, and gave him an idea.

"That would be a shrewd trick, if we could play it," he thought. "I wonder if the barrels are empty?"

His unspoken question was soon answered, for presently the old Tory came over near the window where Bob stood, and taking hold of one of the barrels, rolled it back a yard or so, the manner in which he handled it proving that it was empty.

"Good!" thought Bob. "I believe we can work it all right. There is no doubt but that this room is to be the meeting-place of the officers and Tories, and if a dozen of us can get in there unseen by this old man and hide in the barrels, we will be in a position to hear what is said, and when the time comes we can spring a big surprise on the redcoats."

Bob hastened back to where the "Liberty Boys" stood, and explained the situation to them.

He talked the matter over with Mark Morrison, Sam Sanderson, and others, and at last it was decided to permit only the two British officers to enter the house; they would then be captured by the boys who were concealed in the barrels, after the talk of the redcoats had been listened to for as long a time as was desirable.

The main body of "Liberty Boys" was to surround the house, and make prisoners of the Tories as fast as they put in an appearance. By so doing the chance of being forced to kill any of the Tories would be done away with, as they would likely come in small groups that could not offer resistance to the "Liberty Boys."

Bob then selected eleven of the boys, and told them to come with him.

"We will go to the house, watch our chance, enter the room, and get into the barrels," he said. "I think we can do it without much trouble or danger of discovery."

They reached the house, and Bob again looked through the window.

The old Tory was just leaving the room.

The youths waited patiently, and a few minutes later the old Tory emerged from the house and made his way in the direction of the stable.

"Now is our time, boys," said Bob in an eager but cautious voice. "We will enter the house while he is at the stable."

They stole to the door, and opening it, entered the house.

There was a candle burning on a table at one side of the room, and this enabled the youths to see what they were doing.

The room they had entered adjoined the one in which the meeting was to be held, and they opened the connecting door, and passed through into the other room without meeting anyone.

"We had better not lose any time, boys," said Bob. "Those officers are likely to put in an appearance at any moment. Get into the barrels as quickly as possible."

The youths obeyed, and each got into one of the barrels.

There were fifteen barrels, so there was plenty, and three to spare.

The "Liberty Boys" were not any too quick.

Scarcely had they taken up their positions in the barrels, and dropped the heads back into the place before footsteps were heard.

Then they heard the connecting door open, followed by a voice, which said:

"This way, gentlemen. Step right in, and take seats."

The officers had come, the concealed "Liberty Boys" knew, and they listened eagerly.

"Thank you," said another voice. "Have none of the loyalists arrived yet?"

"Not yet, sir," was the reply, in the old Tory's voice.

"They will be putting in an appearance pretty soon," said another voice, evidently that of the other officer.

"I think it will be quite a while before you will see any of those Tories in this room," thought Bob. "They won't get this far."

The two officers were where Bob could see them through a small crack between the staves of the barrel he was in, and he saw them take seats.

Then they began discussing the matter on which they were engaged, and some of the things said were of considerable interest, and Bob learned something about the manner in which Tories were talked over into joining the British army.

He learned that they were offered pretty good inducements, and heard the arguments that the officers intended making, and what they intended to offer.

"I don't think they will get a chance to make any offers to-night, however," thought Bob. "This is one time when they will meet with a disappointment, I am confident."

Presently the officers began talking of the matter of holding Savannah, and this talk was listened to with interest by Bob and the other "Liberty Boys."

The British in Savannah were well aware of the fact that the patriot army of the South, under General Lincoln, in co-operation with the French fleet of D'Estaing, was getting ready to try to recapture Savannah, and the conversation between the two officers was interesting because of the fact that they talked of the plans of the British commandant, and Bob and his comrades learned much

that would be of use to General Lincoln when he got ready to advance against the city.

The officers, unconscious of the fact that there were patriots within hearing distance, talked unreservedly, and Bob was quite willing to remain passive in the barrels and listen just as long as the two would talk on the subject they were then on.

The youths were uncomfortable, but they were used to hardships, and did not mind a little thing like being cramped up in a barrel.

At last, however, the two officers ceased talking about the holding of Savannah, and turned their attention upon the present, and the matter which had brought them thither.

One looked at his watch.

"Seems to me that some of the loyalists should be here by this time," he remarked.

"Yes, it is certainly time some of them were here," was the other's reply.

"I have an idea that some of them are here," thought Dick; "but as my comrades have probably taken them prisoners, they will not put in an appearance in this room."

The officers did not know there was anything that would interfere to prevent the Tories from entering the house, however, and so they talked a while longer.

Then one rose and stretched himself.

"This is tiresome work," he remarked. "I can't think why the loyalists should be so late in putting in an appearance."

"Nor I," was the reply. "They should have been here ere this."

"Let us call the owner of the house and ask him if he has heard anyone yet."

"Very well; but I should think that the loyalists would have come right in had they put in an appearance."

"They might have paused outside, to talk the matter over a bit among themselves before coming in."

"True."

Bob thought that it was about time to act, and decided to do so at once.

He gave the signal agreed upon, a shrill whistle, and then, suddenly, like so many jacks-in-boxes, they threw the covers up and popped up out of the barrels.

It was a shrewd trick the "Liberty Boys" played. When they leaped up out of the barrels the British officers were almost paralyzed with surprise and consternation.

They stood as if petrified, and stared in open-mouthed and horrified amazement.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOT WORK.

Before the British could recover control of themselves, they were covered by pistols in the hands of the "Liberty Boys," and Bob cried sternly:

"Stand where you are, and don't attempt to escape or resist, or you are dead men."

"What does t-this m-mean?" stammered one of the officers.

"It means that you are our prisoners."

"Who are you?"

"The Liberty Boys of '76', at your service."

"The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

"Yes; you have heard of us, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Then you know we are not to be trifled with. Turn your backs toward us, and place your hands behind you."

The officers hesitated an instant, and glanced toward the door, as if contemplating making a desperate dash for liberty, but Bob said, sternly:

"Don't try it, if you are wise. This house is surrounded by one hundred men, and you could not escape, even if you got out of this room and the house—which you would not, for we are dead shots, and would just as soon kill you as look at you."

"We surrender," said one of the officers. "Be careful with those pistols; they might go off."

"We will be careful. The weapons will not go off unless you try to play some kind of a trick."

The officers placed their hands behind their backs, and the "Liberty Boys" leaped out of the barrels, and tied the prisoners' wrists together behind their backs with silk handkerchiefs.

Just as they finished this work the old Tory who owned the house put in an appearance, and when he saw the "Liberty Boys," and realized that the two officers were prisoners, he was badly frightened.

"W-what does this m-mean?" he asked, stammeringly.

"It means that your guests are prisoners," replied Bob, coolly, "and unless you are very careful, you will be a prisoner also, for you are a Tory, and a traitor to your country."

"Oh, don't make a prisoner of me," the man cried, tremblingly. "I know I have been a Tory, but I won't be any more. I'll be a patriot, yes I will."

"I guess he'd be almost anything to anybody, Bob," said Mark, with scorn in the tones.

"Yes, I think he is that kind of a man," was the reply. Then to the Tory Bob said:

"You will do well to be careful in future. Don't harbor any more redecoats, or assist them in any way, for if you do, and I find it out, as I am likely to do, we will come and pull you up to the limb of a tree and leave you hanging there."

"Oh, I'll be careful. I won't harbor any more redcoats!" the Tory cried.

"What a miserable poltroon," said one of the officers.

"That is just what he is!" said the other, and he gave the Tory a kick that brought a howl of pain from the lips of the old man.

"There, that will do," said Bob. "Don't be too handy with that foot of yours, my friend."

"I couldn't help it. He made me so angry," was the reply.

"May I go?" asked the old Tory, looking appealingly at Bob, and rubbing his leg where it had been kicked.

"Yes. But remember what I have told you."

"I will." Then the old man hobbled out of the room.

"We may as well go now," said Bob, and they left the house, taking the two officers along with them.

When they got outside they found that the other "Liberty Boys" had captured the fifty Tories who had come to the place with the intention of joining the British army.

The prisoners were a frightened-looking lot of men. They were for the most part young fellows from nineteen to twenty-four years of age, and they were badly scared. It was plain that they feared their time had come, and that they would not live to see another sunrise.

"How did you learn that we were to be here to-night?" asked one of the officers.

"Oh, it wouldn't do to tell you that," replied Bob. "Suffice it to say that we knew it. We know a great deal more about what is going on in these parts than you have any idea of."

"Well, you played a shrewd trick on us, I must admit, and one that was wholly unexpected."

"Yes, we sprung a big surprise on you, didn't we?"

"You certainly did."

Among the Tory prisoners was found Mart Miller. Henry Whipple pointed his finger accusingly at the young man, and said sternly:

"So you are a Tory and a traitor to your country, are you, Mart Miller? I have all along suspected that you were not at heart a patriot, though you pretended to be."

"Hasn't a fellow a right to think as he pleases about this matter at issue between the king and the people of America?" asked Mart sullenly.

"I suppose he has; but how any American can be in favor of helping the king fight against his own people is more than I can understand."

"A man who will do that would rob his own father if he got a chance," said Bob Estabrook, scathingly.

Mart hung his head, and had no more to say. The truth was that his spirit was pretty thoroughly crushed. He was in love with Lucy Whipple, Henry's sister, and he realized that now that he was known to be a Tory he would not stand any chance to win the girl, who was an ardent patriot, and a warm hater of all who were friendly to King George.

As it was pretty certain that all the Tories who were to come had already put in an appearance, it was decided to start at once for Henry Whipple's home.

The "Liberty Boys" made their way to where their horses were, and the prisoners were placed on the backs of a sufficient number of animals to accommodate them; then the youths mounted, and in the cases where there was a prisoner on a "Liberty Boy's" horse, the youth got up be-

hind. The result was that more than half the party of "Liberty Boys" were forced to ride double.

They made very good progress, however, and reached the home of Henry Whipple without having encountered any redcoats. They were rather glad of this, as they were so handicapped with the prisoners that they would not have been in good shape for a fight.

When Bob told Dick Slater of the success of their shrewd trick he was delighted.

"You did splendidly, Bob," the youth said. "Jove, I wish I could have been there and seen the British officers when you sprung the surprise on them."

"They were the most surprised men that ever I saw in all my life, Dick."

"I can readily believe that."

"Yes; they were practically paralyzed with amazement."

"And you captured fifty Tories, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is good, too."

"And I learned something from the conversation of the two officers that will be of great use to General Lincoln, Dick."

"That is good. You had better send a messenger to him with the information at once, hadn't you?"

"I will go myself."

"All right. That will be best, likely. But get back as soon as you can, Bob, for the British are likely to scour the country round about here, to-morrow, in search of the two missing officers, and I want you to be in command of the 'Liberty Boys'."

"I don't think there will be any danger to be apprehended from that source, Dick, for I believe that General Lincoln will advance with the main army, and in that event we will of course be safe here."

"True."

Bob did not delay, but after looking after things, and seeing to it that the prisoners would be carefully guarded during the night, he mounted his horse and rode away in the direction of the encampment of the main army of the patriots.

He found it when he had gone only about ten miles. The patriots and their French allies—the troops that had been sent ashore from the French fleet which lay just off Savannah—had advanced the day before.

"I am glad they have done so," thought Bob. "Now, if they will break camp and march, they can easily reach the vicinity of the Whipple home before morning."

Bob was challenged by the sentinel, but on telling who he was, was permitted to pass right on into the camp, for he was well known by the majority of the patriot soldiers in the main army.

A few minutes later he was in the tent of General Lincoln, who had not yet retired, late though it was, being eleven o'clock. He was up till midnight, nearly every night, studying how to best get the better of the redcoats and drive them out of Savannah.

He welcomed Bob, for he knew the youth must have some news for him.

He listened intently and eagerly while Bob told him what he and his "Liberty Boys" had done that night, and when the general heard that two British officers and fifty Tories had been captured he was delighted.

"That was a good stroke of work," he said. "I am glad you made a success of that."

Then Bob told him what he had heard the two officers say while they were talking, and while he and his comrades were concealed in the barrels.

General Lincoln was greatly pleased, and rubbed his hands in a satisfied manner.

"That is just the information I have been wishing to secure, Bob," he said. "Now I am at last ready to advance upon the city of Savannah."

"I thought it would be just what you wished to know," said Bob.

"Yes, and we will begin the advance at once. Of course, we will have to go slowly when we get within a comparatively short distance of Savannah, but it is now time to begin the siege."

He decided to do as Bob suggested, and march to the vicinity of the Whipple home before morning.

"That will enable us to protect your 'Liberty Boys,' and hold on to the prisoners you have secured," the general said. "Yes, we will march there to-night."

"I will remain and guide you," said Bob.

And he did.

About two o'clock in the morning the army was in motion, and just as the sun was coming up, the tired soldiers were given the order to halt and go into camp.

The army was stretched out through the timber, from the main road to the Whipple home, and General Lincoln took up his quarters in the house. He was delighted to see Dick looking so well.

"You are getting along all right, I see," he said.

"Yes," replied Dick. "I think I shall be able to get out in a week or ten days. I fear I shall not get to help you thrash the redcoats in Savannah, however."

But he did. That is, he was enabled to take part in the last stages of the siege—during the last week of it, in fact.

The next day after the patriot army reached the vicinity of the Whipple home was the 23d, and from that time on the siege was vigorously prosecuted, the patriot army approaching closer and closer to Savannah with each succeeding day.

There was skirmish after skirmish between the land forces, and the French fleet kept up a vigorous bombardment of Savannah from its place just outside the harbor.

For two weeks this was kept up, and then Dick Slater was able to take his place at the head of his company of brave "Liberty Boys." He was given a joyous welcome by the youths, and on this day they fought with such fury that the British could not stand before them at all.

For a week longer the siege continued, culminating in one desperate attempt to carry the city by storm. This failed, however, and as there had been great loss of life in the ranks of the allied armies, and as it seemed a hopeless case to try to capture the city the attempt was given up, and General Lincoln retired from the vicinity, while the French soldiers went back on shipboard and the fleet sailed, part going to the West Indies, and part back to France.

The two British officers, who had been held prisoners all this time, were exchanged for two officers that had been captured by the British the day of the attempted storming of the city's works. The fifty Tories made promise not to take up arms against the patriot army, and were then let return to their homes.

Henry Whipple joined the "Liberty Boys," and fought with them till the end of the war, when he and Mildred Thornhill were married, the girl's father giving his consent to the union freely, for he had made up his mind to become an American citizen and remain in this country.

Tom Fenton, who had won the love of pretty Lucy Whipple, returned to the South when the war ended, and married the brave patriot girl.

Mart and Susan Miller were disappointed because of their inability to win the love of Lucy and Henry Whipple, but bore up as best they could.

Lieutenant Marsh, who had loved Mildred Thornhill, and who had been so eager to kill Henry Whipple, the giant patriot, was himself killed in the battle the day the patriots stormed Savannah, and so he did not live to endure the torture of seeing Mildred the wife of his hated enemy.

"The "Liberty Boys" were soon hard at work in another part of the country, and as was their custom, were making it hot for the redcoats and Tories.

THE END.

The next number (105) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' CUNNING; OR, OUTWITTING THE ENEMY," by Harry Moore.

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